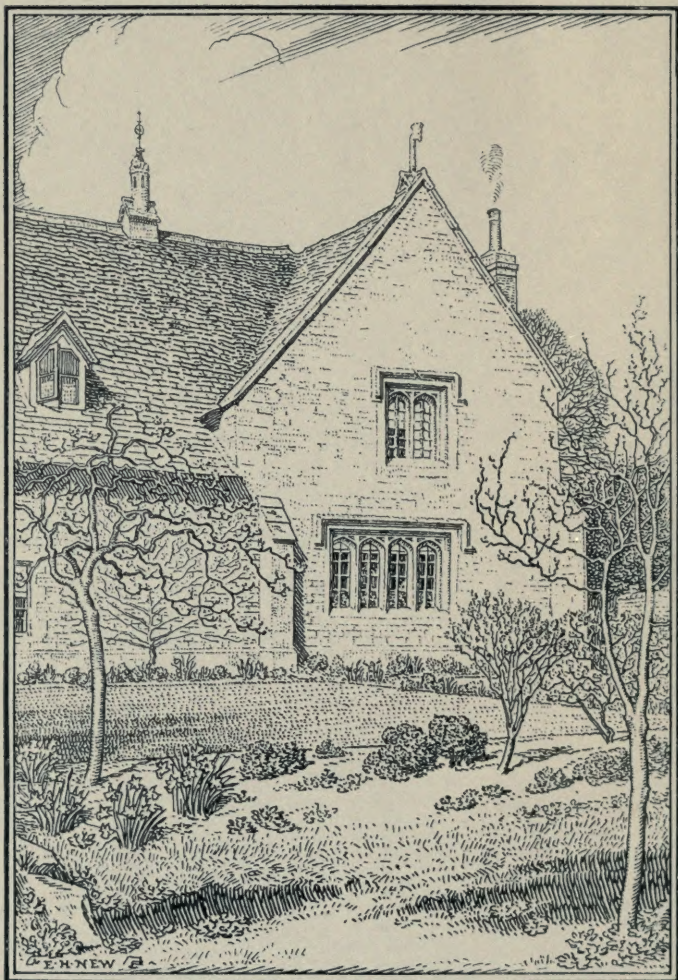


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THE OLD MANOR HOUSE, KINGHAM

KINGHAM OLD AND NEW

STUDIES IN A RURAL PARISH

BY

William WARDE FOWLER

AUTHOR OF 'A YEAR WITH THE BIRDS,' ETC.

WITH FRONTISPIECE BY E. H. NEW
PLAN OF THE PARISH, AND MAP

OXFORD

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TO THE MEMORY OF
FORTY YEARS OF UNBROKEN FRIENDSHIP
WITH
SAMUEL DAVIS LOCKWOOD
LATE RECTOR OF KINGHAM

PREFATORY NOTE

THE first two chapters in this little book were originally published in 1895 as a single essay in an American Economic Journal, at the instance of Professor W. J. Ashley, who was then Professor of Economic History at Harvard. The rest have been written at intervals since then, to please myself: but one of these, that about the birds (Chapter V), was given last spring as a lecture to the Ashmolean Society at Oxford. I am greatly indebted to my very old friend, Herbert A. Evans, for most useful help in reading the proofs; and to Mr. Stephen Warner, of Lincoln College, for his beautiful drawing of the Manor House chimney, which adorns the cover of the book.

If Kingham were less happily placed, less prosperous than it is, something of the gloom which is popularly believed to overspread our English country life, might be visible in the following pages. But I think that village life at Kingham is not wanting in cheerfulness; and when trouble comes on any of our people, the kindness of their neighbours is always ready to relieve them. For this and other reasons I find that I cannot add my voice to those that are just now demanding drastic social and economic remedies for evils of which we are here happily almost unconscious.

W. W. F.

February 21, 1913.

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CHAPTER I

KINGHAM BEFORE THE CONQUEST

MORE than thirty years ago, when I first became a freeholder in our village, I found among the title-deeds sent me by the lawyer a number of strange documents the meaning of which I did not then fully understand. They were in fact descriptions of the property held by my predecessor and his ancestors in the form of strips of land in the Kingham open field, apart from his 'tenement' and garden, which are now mine. Not long after this I happened to read a now famous book, which explained the meaning of these old documents and sent me back to them with curiosity aroused: I mean the late Mr. F. Seebohm's *English Village Community*. Then I found to my astonishment that the old open field system had actually lasted here down to 1850, just thirty years before my purchase was made; in that year was completed the enclosure of our parish, about which I have something to tell in another chapter. Unluckily the old Rector, who had lived in the parish for fourteen years before the enclosure, and for twenty-nine years after it, and who had been one of those most interested in the change, died just as I came into my little holding, and I lost the chance of hearing the whole story from an intelligent and businesslike person.

But I kept on trying to satisfy my curiosity, and

found some help among the old village folks ; and better still, I found during my daily walks that the study of the agrarian topography and history of Kingham was quite happily compatible with that of its birds. In course of time I was asked by my friend Ashley, then Professor of Economic History at Harvard, who was aware of my habits, to write a paper about ancient Kingham in an American Journal of Economics ; this I wrote, and it is this that I am now rewriting. When I lately read it over again with a critical mind, I thought it would be worth while to revise it in the light of the great works which have dealt with our English agrarian economy since it was put together—the illuminating works of Maitland, Round, and Vinogradoff. Though my studies have for the most part of necessity lain in far distant regions of history, I must confess that I always return with extreme pleasure to the writings of these great scholars, and also to the contemplation of the topography of our parish and of such old maps of it as I can procure. Most of our villages have some substantial tale to tell, some small mite to cast into the treasury of our ancient history. I believe Kingham to be one of these ;¹ but I have neither time nor spare eyesight to work it out in detail. I can only hope that

¹ It is curious that three out of the four authors referred to above have mentioned Kingham in their works. Mr. Seebohm chose six of our villages, including Kingham, to illustrate the increase of the value of land in the period between Domesday and the Hundred Rolls (*English Village Community*, p. 87). Mr. Round has printed three charters by which Geoffrey de Mandeville, third of the name, grants his land at Kingham to his brother

some future resident here may be able to supplement my small beginnings by discovery of documents in the Record Office, the Bursary of New College, Oxford, and elsewhere.

Oxfordshire was one of those midland counties in which there was little enclosure till the eighteenth century.¹ But when Arthur Young wrote his Survey of the agriculture of the county, close on the end of that century, the work of enclosing had already gone far; and just about that time, so far as I can learn, an attempt was made to get the necessary Act of Parliament to introduce the new system into our parish. It proved a failure, for the Rector of that day, Parson Western, of whom odd stories are still told, seems to have done all he could to oppose the project. Parson Western lived till 1836, and it took another fourteen years to get the enclosure started afresh and brought to completion. There are one or two old persons still living in the village (1912) who remember the look of the open fields before the parish was divided into the compact and well hedged farms of which it now consists; and twenty

Ernulf, and then to the latter's son (Round, *Geoffrey de Mandeville*, 230 foll.). And I cannot forbear mentioning, though it is a trifling matter, that in his first work on these subjects the ever-to-be-lamented Maitland came across a William de Keingham in putting together his *Pleas of the Crown for the County of Gloucester in the year 1221* (p. 45 of that work).

¹ See the *Victoria History of Oxfordshire*, vol. ii, p. 188 foll., and references there given; Gonner, *Common Land and Enclosure*, p. 259. It is curious that there should have been a very early enclosure at Churchill, which dispossessed sixteen labourers (see *Vid. Hist.* ii. 190).

years ago another old man, who as a lad had taken part himself in the work of enclosing, seemed to take huge delight in strolling with me about the land, and explaining the changes that had been wrought on it since his boyhood. Two others, better educated, yet perhaps hardly so helpful, have added something to my information; and with the aid of my own eyes and of a good map of the parish made in 1827, kindly lent to me more than once by Lord Ducie, I have been able to form a fairly complete picture of the ancient geography and economy of our little community.

It may be as well, before I go on, to say a word about the character of the district in which our village lies. It is a part of the country about which history has little to tell before the Civil War; yet the plain evidence of Domesday proves that long before the Conquest it must have been fairly well populated and brought under cultivation. If you take the railway from Oxford to Worcester, you come in a very few minutes upon our stream, the Evenlode; and following it up along its winding woodland course as far as Charlbury, you then come out upon a more open country, with heights to east and west. You are still following the Evenlode, but no longer in a narrow grassy valley; here begins an airy open district, the whole of which seems to be cultivated, except an occasional stretch of wood, and the meadows which flank the stream on each side. These last are used for hay in summer and pasture in winter; other pasture-fields are of course to be seen here and

there, but the general look of the slopes and hills suggests a very assiduous cultivation.

We see some villages from the train window, usually on ground rising a little from the river ; but those which give their names to the next two stations on the railway, Ascott and Shipton-under-Wychwood, are exceptions, being placed just where the higher ground comes down to the alluvial soil of the meadows. Other villages are on the brow of the hills to our left, but these are smaller and less obvious to the eye. If we look at the ordnance map, we shall find that the larger villages in the valley usually have names ending in 'ham' or 'ton', while among those on the hills such names are rare. Up there we find names such as Westcote, Icomb, Fifield, Churchill, Sarsden, Cornwell : and there are two little hill towns, which must have served as markets for the district, standing at seven and eight hundred feet above the sea—Chipping Norton and Stow-on-the-wold—conspicuous afar ; but the typical village settlement seems to have been in the valley or just above it, if we are to judge by the prevalence of the terminations usually supposed to indicate it.¹ Shipton, Milton, Lyneham, Kingham, and Oddington, are all in this position.

One may ask whether these *hams* and *tons* were in

¹ For the terminations *ham* and *ton* (*tun*), see Vinogradoff, *Growth of the Manor*, p. 147 ; *Berkshire Place Names*, by Stenton, p. 9 foll. There is another meaning of *ham*, well known in many parts of England, viz. a strip of meadow by the side of a river. But this can hardly be the meaning of our *ham*, for Kingham is on rising ground, away from any such strips. *Ham*,

6 KINGHAM BEFORE THE CONQUEST

their origin settlements of the Teutonic invaders of our island, or whether, as Mr. Seebohm fancied,¹ these invaders usually made use of pre-existing Celtic or Roman settlements, and found a system of cultivation ready made for them. To this question I can give no direct answer. It is probable that palaeolithic man occupied the site of Kingham, for my friend Mr. Basil de Sélincourt recently dug up in his garden, in gravel some fifty feet above the present level of the Evenlode, a fine flint implement of that period, fashioned so as to be grasped firmly in the hand. But from that remote age to the time when the Teutons began to call that identical spot their 'town hill',² I know of nothing to show that the site of the village was inhabited, though the Neolithic people seem to have abounded on the hills of North Oxfordshire, as is shown by long and round barrows, and stone circles, like the Rollright stones. Later on, Celts and Romans were not far away; Roman roads and villas, and Celtic names like Icomb, show that this region was by no means a desert in the centuries preceding and following the Christian era. And on the hill to the north of us, just below the Kingham Hill Homes, a number of objects belonging to the Celto-Roman period were dug up some years ago—pottery in fragments,

in that sense is, however, a Kingham word; in a New College terrier of 1639 I find mentioned three parcels of ground near the mill, called 'over, middle, & nether Hamme'. So at Tew, in a charter of 1315, three acres lie in the *hamme beside larke well* (*Godstow Register*, ed. A. Clark, p. 567).

¹ *English Village Community*, p. 254 foll.; criticized by Haverfield, *Romanization of Roman Britain*, ed. 2, p. 53.

² See below, p. 18 foll.

some bronze ornaments, one or two fragments of glass, and a few Roman coins, the latest of which are of Allectus and Constantine, the former coined at the London mint.¹

But this was nearly a mile from the village; and until we have some fresh light on the question, I think we must conclude that Kingham as a village settlement had no existence until the West Saxons came this way. Taking it as a working hypothesis that when they came they had to clear the ground for themselves, let us see what kind of a position they chose to settle down on.

Avoiding the low-lying meadows of the Evenlode, liable to flood, and indeed flooded this day of writing (August 20, 1912), they chose a rising ground to the north-east, which at a few hundred yards from the stream becomes pleasantly level for a short distance, and then rises again for a mile or more, until at a height of some seven hundred feet above the sea it begins to fall again in what is now the adjoining parish of Cornwell. To the south-east this rising ground is flanked by another series of low meadows, through which runs a smaller stream to join the Evenlode at right angles. But to

¹ I am greatly indebted to my old friend, Mrs. Grisewood, of Daylesford Rectory, for information about these objects, the preservation of which has been entirely due to her antiquarian zeal. But the only clear historical inference that I can draw from them is that there were civilized people on the hill above us down to the time of Constantine, i.e. the first half of the fourth century A.D., and no doubt for some time later, till the Saxon invaders made a settlement here below them, on the site of the present village. That event can hardly be placed earlier than the first half of the sixth century.

the north-west there is no such boundary. Here the ground lies fairly level, and you may walk along it over good sound cornland to the end of the parish where it runs with that of Daylesford.

Whatever race it was that originally chose this site, it was chosen with a keen eye to its natural advantages. The settlement itself was on the level ground above the angle formed by the two streams; just below it the smaller of these could be used to turn a mill, as it still does; the land just here is good and wholesome, and drains naturally and easily in both directions. The low-lying meadows are close by, and abundant hay is grown on them; and towards the hill to the north-east there was such an expanse of land suitable for clearing, as made the success of the settlement a certainty. Within some five hundred years the amount under cultivation was not less than a thousand acres, and probably more, as we shall see directly.

I have said that the original settlement was in this position, because the village is there now. But the village has in course of time grown far beyond its earliest limits, and the question arises whether we can find any data for determining where the nucleus was out of which it grew. I think we can; and though this may seem a very small matter to trouble oneself about, it is one of some interest in village topography.

It is characteristic not only of Kingham, but of almost all the villages round us, that the church stands at one extremity, while the houses straggle away in one or two

streets towards the land which before the enclosures was the 'open field'. In the *hams* and *tons* of the valley, the church is usually at the end nearest the river, and the village has grown out in the direction of the slopes where the arable of the farms is for the most part situated; this is so at Yarnton, Charlbury, Shipton, Kingham, Oddington, and Evenlode. The hill villages on the other hand have taken an exactly opposite direction. There, whatever may be the case now, the ancient arable was on the slopes *below* the village; and the cottages accordingly straggle down the hill, as a rule, while the church stands at the top by itself. It is perhaps worth noting, however, that this ancient arable on the slopes, which is still discernible by its well-marked ridges and furrows, has at one time or another been turned into pasture; and that the arable is now above the village, on the highest ground, where the light soil and natural drainage offer conveniences which the original settlers presumably failed to discover. The original condition of things has in this way been almost entirely reversed at Fifield, Westcot, Idbury, and Icomb. What was once, to judge by the Domesday entries relating to these villages, waste ground, i. e. woodland and pasture, on the tops of the Cotswold ridge, has become valuable cornland.

These hill villages are hardly large enough to form very good examples of the principle I wish to make clear, that in this district the village has had a tendency, so to speak, to run away from its church. Those of the

valley show this tendency better, and we have one instance so striking that it deserves more than a passing allusion. Two miles up the valley is the large Gloucestershire village of Oddington, of which from the railway nothing is to be seen but an old church in a wood, and a large manor-house near it. If you were to alight here and cross the valley to the church, you would suppose it deserted; and so in fact it is, being now used only for marriages and burials, though it is a large and fine Perpendicular building. The truth is that in this case the village has so completely deserted its church—I speak of material, not of spiritual things—and has straggled so far up the slopes towards its arable land, that it has been thought necessary to build a new church to suit the altered circumstances. I should guess that the original *tun* was where the church is now, in close proximity to the manor-house,¹ and that the village remained thereabouts until long after the fifteenth century, when this church was presumably built. An old man of whom I asked some questions one day in the churchyard, did in fact tell me that his father, when digging for the squire near the church, came on

¹ This is, of course, the case in many villages, and good examples at hand are those of Cornwell and Chastleton. At Cornwell the church is within the park, and separated from the village by the grounds of the manor-house; and it is much the same at Chastleton. 'The church itself, if an ancient one, may be taken as generally marking the site of the original settlement. If not succeeding a heathen temple, it was at least adjacent to the position of the sacred hearth of the lord's house'. So Gomme (*Village Community*, p. 128 foll.), with some plausibility.

the foundations of buildings, and that the tradition at Oddington is that their village has changed its position.

Let us now return to Kingham, and see whether the same rule holds good here. I have already said that the church is at the end of the village nearest the Evenlode, while the village stretches away from it towards the hill and the arable. This suggests that Kingham has at one time undergone very much the same change as Oddington, though it has been less marked and revolutionary in our case. An arbitrary lord of the manor may have succeeded, both here and at Oddington, in driving the village away towards the hill, by enclosing land near the church. As it is, the church stands at some distance from our oldest farm-houses and cottages, and the intermediate space is filled by the present fine Rectory house of 1688, with its barns, stables, and gardens, and by the old Rectory house with its tithe barn (now pulled down) and orchard. The result is at this day that the west end of the village may be described as an ecclesiastical region, while the farmers and labourers are settled in that less sheltered part which is nearer to the land on which they work.

If then the cases of Kingham and Oddington are analogous in the main, and if we are satisfied that the original settlement at Oddington was near the church, we may fairly assume that it was the same at Kingham. And this is supported, not only by the fact that the position is in every way the best that could have been chosen, but by the very distinct traces of an ancient

enclosure, which I am sorely tempted to identify as that of the original *burh*, i.e. the home farm or central buildings of the manor.¹ Immediately behind the church is a large field, now generally called the Close, or Closes; and in this field, and enclosing the greater part of it, is a foss about eight feet wide, and varying in depth, rectangular in shape, and pretty clearly marked throughout its course, except to the west, where it abuts on the hollow formed by a little brook now used as a drain, and where too it is lost among the farm buildings belonging to the Rectory. If we imagine it still complete, it would take in the greater part of the present church, which stands almost exactly in the centre of its north-eastern side.²

I should indeed be hardly so ready to fancy that this foss may have some relation to the nucleus of the oldest

¹ See Andrews, *English Manor*, p. 112, who takes *burh* as the quadrangle, with the various farm buildings. Cp. Vinogradoff, *Growth of the Manor*, p. 224. A careful survey of our Bury Close will show, in one part at least, much of that irregularity of surface which is usually a mark of the presence of old foundations. For 'burylands' and 'buryfields' reference may be usefully made to Pearman's *History of the Manor of Bensington, Oxon.*, p. 115 foll. (This word *burh* is best known as used for a fortified place or town; for an earlier use see Maitland, *Collected Papers*, vol. iii, p. 36.)

² The Rev. H. Salter, whose authority as a county antiquarian is great, writes to me: 'I had reached independently the same conclusion as you about the rectangular form of the "burg", or as it was called in mediaeval times, the town, in Oxfordshire villages. In Shirburn the rectangle survived until a hundred years ago, and not a single cottage or building was erected outside of it till 1810—of course with the exception of the mill. . . . The artificial rectangularity of the "town" and also often of the fields, is astonishing.'

settlement, in spite of its very ancient appearance, if it were not that the ground which it encloses still bears the name of Bury (or Bury Pen) Close. It is indeed only the old men who know this name, and one of them had already corrupted it into 'Betty' Close when he told me of it. Now, such names as Bury close, Bury field, Bury mead, and so on, are common enough, not only in our district, but in other parts of the country—one only has to gaze for a while at an ordnance map to find them. Being usually near the church, they are popularly supposed to have something to do with churchyards, but in most cases they probably have a much more interesting story to tell. The story of ours seems to me to be plain enough; the word *bury* must be here the old English *burh*, i.e. the enclosure made by the earliest lord of the settlement to protect his people and his cattle from intruders. Whether Kingham had a lord from the very beginning we cannot tell; but it is perhaps significant that it was not called *Kingbury*, which might have suggested a place in which a lord's enclosure was the central point, but *Kingham*, where the termination rather suggests the community as a whole. Thus we may perhaps imagine that if we had a lord from the beginning, he was not one of overwhelming importance.

We have indeed no trace in ancient times of any residence here of a lord of the manor. We cannot say for certain that the first syllable of the name Kingham really means a lord or chief.¹ We do not know to whom

¹ See Stenton's *Berkshire Place Names*, p. 8. The oldest spellings of the

the village belonged before the Conquest. It was given by the Conqueror, as Domesday tells us, to Geoffrey de Mandeville, and in his family it seems to have long remained.¹ But we need not suppose that they resided here, though they may have made use of a house in Oxford which was attached to the manor.² The days of the immediate influence of the great lord upon the manor were doubtless over before the Conquest; and the original *burh* would become the home farm simply, with the residence of the lord's steward. Eventually, as I imagine, the erection and endowment of a new church in the fourteenth century supplanted even these buildings, and the later manor-house, which still exists in the form of three cottages, is at the other end of the village and near the open fields; its tenant must have been driven away to the plebeian quarter by the increasing ecclesiastical importance of the west end. But when

name are as follows: Caningeham, in Domesday; Caingeham, Kahingeham, and Chaingeham, in three successive charters of the de Mandeville family, printed by Round in his *Geoffrey de Mandeville*, p. 230 foll.; Kaingham in *Testa de Nevill*, pp. 102 and 106. On p. 45 of Maitland's *Pleas of the Crown for the County of Gloucester in 1221*, it appears as Keingham. Mr. Stenton's remarks suggest that 'ing' in Caning or Kahing might be simply a genitive singular of a personal name, so that Kingham might mean the 'ham' of Can. 'The home of the Canings', is Mr. Alexander's explanation in *Oxfordshire Place Names* (1912), p. 140.

¹ See Round's *Geoffrey de Mandeville*, p. 230 foll.

² This house is mentioned in the third of the charters printed by Mr. Round, 'hospitium meum Oxenfordie ad praedictam villam pertinens', p. 232. This practice of combining a manor with a house in the county town has been studied in Domesday by my friend Mr. A. Ballard; see his *Domesday Boroughs*:

these things happened it is not possible to say, nor will it be, until fresh light is thrown on the history of the manor and the rectory in the period from Edward I to the Reformation. The beautiful architecture of the existing 'manor-house' can hardly be earlier than the sixteenth century, but it may have succeeded an earlier one on the same site.

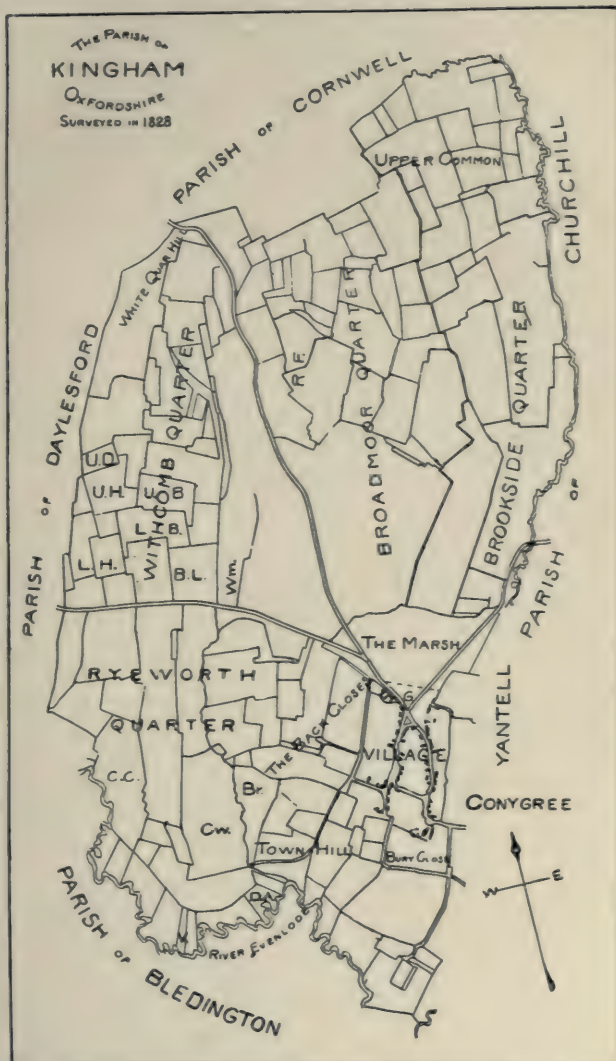
If we have found the spot where the earliest settlement lay, let us now proceed outwards from that nucleus, and see how far we can reconstruct the economic situation of the young community. So far we have been speaking only of the lord's homestead, situated in Bury Close, which may possibly at the very outset have been self-sufficing, with a few slaves or house-servants living within it and cultivating the lord's land. But in the dawn of what we may call historical times we seem to see the beginnings of a village, lying somewhat apart from the central buildings of the lord. A few wattled huts, grouped together irregularly, would probably be found, dwellings of families who worked the lord's land, and held as compensation for that work some portion of land in their own right.¹ This rude beginning of a village would naturally be looked for in the direction of this land of theirs; and we must now see if it is possible to discover where that earliest 'open field' lay. We may be certain that it was near the village, but in which direction?

¹ See Rogers, *Economic Interpretation of History*, p. 14; Vinogradoff, *Growth of the Manor*, p. 224 foll.

Let us look at the map of the parish made before the enclosure. The parish extends a full mile and a half to the north and east, up the hill of which I have already spoken, and also down its south-eastern slope, which descends to the brook dividing it from Churchill parish. But all this more distant part of the parish must have been practically unknown to the earliest community, or only used as 'waste' or hunting-ground. It forms three of the four 'quarters' into which the parish was ultimately divided, and which we see marked on the map: and the names of these quarters, two of them at least, seem to suggest that all this region was once undrained moorland. Those running up the hill are Withcombe quarter and Broadmoor quarter, names suggestive of withies and heather: the third, including the lower slopes far away to the east, is Brookside quarter. Even the names of the shots or furlongs into which this hill district was ultimately divided for cultivation, have the same story to tell. We find here, for example, Henslade¹ furlong, Birdsmoor furlong, Raunce furze furlong, and other furlongs called Upper Down Thorns, Crow's nest hedge, Buttocks lake,² Washmarsh, and other names now

¹ Henslade. Hen was the old English word for wild-fowl generally. Slade is an open hollow where the water collects to form a runlet, as it does both in this spot and also where our present Slade Farm lies, on these very slopes. I may here incidentally notice the curious word *tite*, for water artificially collected in such a hollow, still in use at Chipping Norton and Chadlington; see Wright's *Dialect Dictionary*, s.v.

² 'Lake' here doubtless meant a stream of some kind, as in many parts of the country. It was in use in this sense here in the seventeenth century;



In reproducing the above map of the parish of Kingham, it has been found necessary to indicate by initial letters some of the divisions referred to in this book. The letters used are as follows:—

- | | | | | |
|--|---|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| U. H. for Upper Hen-
slade Furlong. | U. B. for Upper Birds-
moor Furlong. | R. F. for Raunce
Furze Furlong. | B. L. for Buttocks
Lake Furlong. | C. C. for Castle
Crooks Furlong. |
| L. H. for Lower Hen-
slade Furlong. | L. B. for Lower Birds-
moor Furlong. | U. D. for Upper Down
Thorns Furlong. | Wm. for Washmarsh
Furlong. | D. A. for The Dining
Acres. |
| Br. for Briar Furlong. | Cw. for Crenswell. | G. for The Green. | V. for The Varnels. | C. for The Church. |

forgotten, which show that the memory of the originally wild character of the region long survived its cultivation. They must date from a time when there was a fresh in-taking of land for ploughing, in addition to the earliest arable of which we are in search.

Let us then dismiss from our minds for the moment all this outlying district, and look more closely at the fourth quarter ¹ (or the first, as we should more rightly call it), which extends from the west end of the village along an almost level surface of land, till it reaches the boundary of Daylesford and Worcestershire. It is conveniently divided from the rest of the parish at the present time by the road from Kingham to Daylesford, and from the Gloucestershire parish of Bledington by the Evenlode; and it is marked on the map as Ryeworth quarter.² I believe we can find in this region and its outskirts all the three kinds of land which the infant community would need: land for permanent pasture, land for hay and winter pasture, and arable land. The first of these requisites would be to the north of the village, where is the present Green, and where

'one dole which the lake runneth through' occurs in the New College terrier of 1639, and indicates the mill-stream.

¹ The four quarters, according to my oldest informant, were cultivated before the enclosure on a four-field system, thus: 1, wheat; 2, barley; 3, vetch, peas, beans, &c.; 4, fallow. Cp. Gonner, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

² Ryeworth suggests an early cultivation of a grain now seldom seen in England. For its cultivation in the Middle Ages, see an instance in Denton, *England in the Fifteenth Century*, p. 317, where the reeve had equal parts of wheat and rye, the labourers more rye than wheat.

there was once a tract of some thirty acres called the March or Marsh, which was a common or waste before the enclosure. The hay-land would naturally be in the alluvial land of the Evenlode, which would not be suitable for cultivation, as being liable to flood. At one spot here, adjoining Ryeworth quarter, the farmers up to the time of the enclosure used to cast lots for the portion each was to mow, a ceremony which was followed in the evening by a hearty meal and a festive scene of racing and frisking.¹ This spot is marked on the map as 'Dining Acres', but it is not easy to identify at the present day, for the railway has changed not only the look of the ground but the course of the stream. It was, however, beyond doubt close to that little osier-bed where for so many years I was able to watch the Marsh-warblers.²

So much for two of the village requisites, the waste and the hay-meadow. It will now be easy to identify the position of the third kind of land, which was to supply the human inhabitants with their staple food. This must have been the comparatively high and dry land which lies between the March common and the Evenlode meadows, and which appears on the map under the names of the Back Closes and the Town hill. The first of these names shows that at one time, later in our

¹ This was described to me by my oldest informant, a man named Edden, long since dead. The practice survives at Yarnton; see Mr. R. H. Gretton in *Economic Journal*, March 1910, p. 38 foll., and March 1912, p. 54 foll.

² See below, p. 114.

history, as the arable came to extend further from the village, some part of it near home was enclosed for pasture; the other, the Town hill, suggests that this land was adjacent to and of immediate importance to the *tun*—the most general name for the village in the Old English speech.¹ All this, especially the Town hill, is excellent land, with a slope towards the valley, facing south-west. It is still all that can be desired for cultivation; and as it lay along that eligible level on which the village itself is placed, it was most convenient of access. Beyond it there stretched a long reach of land of the same kind, inviting extension in that direction as demand should arise.

Now, if the original arable lay in this region, it was divided up, according to all the authorities who have written on these subjects, into strips of acres or half-acres, which were distributed among the workers as well as the lord. It might seem futile to ask, sixty years after the enclosure and the total disappearance of the old open-field cultivation to which it put an end, whether any trace of such strips is still to be found here. Yet I believe that I have found such traces; but I must here make a digression before we return to the village.

Ancient ploughland in our neighbourhood, as in many others, is for the most part clearly marked out for the discerning eye by the ridges and furrows of the old system of ploughing. Wherever the land was at all heavy, the farmer would apply this system to his strips

¹ Vinogradoff, *Growth of the Manor*, p. 147 foll.

in the open field. If, for example, his strip was the normal half-acre, a full furlong (220 yards) in length, and 11 yards in breadth, he might make one ridge (or *land*, as it is still called here) of this piece, with a furrow on each side; or if for any reason he preferred it, he might plough it into two ridges, each only $5\frac{1}{2}$ yards broad. The object of this ridging seems to have been to give the land a little help in drying and draining itself; the wet would slip off the ridge into the furrows, and the corn planted on the raised ground between them would have a good dry soil to grow in, exposed to the sun and the wind.¹ In the hollow, if the strip ran with that of a neighbour, would be the *meare* or boundary, consisting of a narrow line of turf running the whole length of the furlong.² Wherever the land once thus

¹ I have recently found an instructive discussion on these ridges and furrows in Marshall's *Gloucestershire* (1788), vol. i, p. 75 foll. He was by no means certain about the original object of the practice. The popular notion, he says, was that it was to increase the quantity of surface; but he points out that in arable land it would rather diminish the quantity, owing to the bad condition of the furrows in most seasons, which is partly the result of the nearness of a deep furrow to an infertile subsoil, partly to its retention of stagnant water in wet seasons. He does not come to any definite conclusion, but I think he really believed (p. 76) that in most districts the object was to render the soil of the ridges dry and warm, i.e. to do in fact the work of draining, as I have assumed above. Cp. p. 31: 'where the subsoil is retentive, every furrow should have its under-drain.' Marshall also has some interesting remarks on the desirability of lowering the ridges where it can be done, as much valuable soil is wasted in the cores of them. Some useful remarks on these ridges and their relation to the acre will be found in Maitland's *Domesday Book and Beyond*, p. 382 foll.

² This word *meare* is still known here, but only by old persons; the thing itself is to be seen four miles away, in the parish of Westcote, where there

treated has been turned into pasture, the formation of ridge and furrow has remained visible to the eye and annoying to the walker and the horseman, showing with wonderful distinctness, even at a great distance, the aspect of the country in the olden time.¹ Though the hedges which the enclosures introduced have often cut right across an ancient furlong, and divert the eye from its shape and meaning, a little observation, especially in dry, bright weather, will reveal the old open system in a perfect state of fossilization. The *meares* only are wanting. All else is there—the ridges or lands,² the hollows between them, the *headlands*, *hadelands* or *hades*, on which the plough turned at the end of its journey over the furlong, abutting on the ridges at right angles, and here and there perhaps a *gore*, or triangular bit of ‘no man’s land’ left out in the rectangular arrangement of the furlongs.

are still some hundreds of acres cultivated on the old system. Another old word which is vanishing with the meares is ‘guggle’. On the meares were found certain snails, with the shells of which the Kingham boys played a game, of which the object was to break your opponent’s ‘guggle’. Hence the expression, ‘I’ll bet you a “guggle”’. This was told me by an old friend now passed away.

¹ There are some ridges on the slopes between Kingham and Churchill, which are so high as to cast a deep shadow into the hollow below them when the sun is not too high in the heavens. Cp. some odd stories in Marshall’s *Gloucestershire*, i. 75 foll.

² ‘Land’ is the usual word here, but in such eighteenth-century deeds as I have seen, they are generally called ridges, and in grass land often *leys* (see below, p. 68). According to their position they may also be called butts or *hades*. They seem to be the *seliones* of the most ancient documents: see Maitland, *Domesday Book and Beyond*, p. 382, a work which appeared after this chapter was originally written.

In some grass-fields their own history is written on the surface in characters so plain that a student might illustrate for himself, without the aid of maps, the leading outward features of the old system of cultivation. If, in fact, every strip had been made into one ridge, with a *meare* on each side of it, we should have had a perfect map of the field from an economic point of view; but this was seldom the case. Observation and measurement in the fields themselves, aided by two or three old 'terriers', have shown me that the ridging does not tally as a rule with the old strip-divisions. The ridges are too narrow, or the furlong is short of the proper length: on the average I find that the ridges run from about three to six in an acre.

Yet in some of the oldest grass-fields I have found ridges of exactly half an acre in extent; and some of these are in a field just at the upper end of the Town hill, which (as I have shown by other considerations) was probably the arable of the earliest village. That this is one of the oldest grass-fields around us is obvious to the eye; it has elms growing in the middle of it, which may be two hundred years old, and which would not be there if in that period it had been used as arable, and its ridging is rugged and broken with age, so that you may fail to notice the nature of its surface unless you walk into it and look about carefully. I was told, too, by the old man who took part in the enclosure, that this was a part of the old cow-common

of the village, no doubt from very remote times : where the cows were brought night and morning to be milked. And yet, in spite of its ancient use as a common, it bears these clear traces of having been at a still remoter date in use as arable. And as its length as a furlong is all but perfect (220 yards), and the breadth of its ridges (11 yards) makes each of them just half an acre, I am tempted to believe that we may look on it as still showing us some of the strips of the most ancient portion of our arable land.

If, then, the lord and his people turned in this direction for their arable, it is here, too, that we may look for the situation of the earliest village. And here, in fact, near to the Town hill and the old pasture common, once under cultivation, lies that part of the village which would strike a visitor as the oldest. Here we have a wide street with stretches of grass between the road and the houses, which are built at various angles to each other and the road, unlike the orderly manner of the eastern and (as I think) more modern street. Here, too, is the sixteenth-century manor-house, standing back from the street, with what looks like the remains of an old moat behind it. This picturesque street, in which every house is pleasing to the eye, including the new village hall and reading-room lately built for us by Mr. Young of Daylesford, and made still more pleasing by the line of the Cotswold ridge which fills in the view to the west, keeps us in touch with the ages that are past, while in the other street we find shops and business,

motors hurrying to catch a train, or cattle driven from a sale at the now important station.

But so far we have been working in the twilight of conjecture, for we have no documents earlier than Domesday Book to give us any unquestionable facts about the earliest settlement, its population, and its land. From the date of Domesday (1086) we start afresh on more solid ground; and in the next chapter I shall make a further attempt to trace the fortunes of the village on the basis of the great survey and later documents.

CHAPTER II

THE KINGHAM OF DOMESDAY AND AFTER

land as yet unreclaimed which was within its ecclesiastical boundary, or land appropriated to the church which was exempt from taxation; but we have here everything that was essential to the community, the

¹ 'Goisfridus de Manneville tenet x hidas in Caningeham de rege : terra xvi carucis : nunc in dominio iiii carucae iiii servi : xix villani cum x bordariis habent xii carucas. Ibi molendinum de xliiii denariis : cix acrae prati xxxiii acrae pasturae. Valuit xii lb. modo xv lb.'

² Vinogradoff, *Villainage in England*, p. 240 foll.

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But so far we have been working in the twilight of conjecture, for we have no documents earlier than Domesday Book to give us any unquestionable facts about the earliest settlement, its population, and its land. From the date of Domesday (1086) we start afresh. I see that the do-

ERRATA IN CHAPTER II.

- Page 35, line 2, for *twenty-one* read *twenty-five*.
 " 3, for *one* read *six*.
 " 4, for *holds* read *hold*.
 " 17, for *twenty-three* read *seventeen*.
 Page 36, line 6, for *twenty and a half* read *twenty-two*.
 " 8, for *seventeen* read *fifteen*.
 " 16, for *forty-six* read *forty-eight*.
 Page 39, line 10, for *exactly* read *nearly*.
 " 18, for *nine* read *seventeen*.

CHAPTER II

THE KINGHAM OF DOMESDAY AND AFTER

HERE is the entry in Domesday Book relating to Kingham :

Geoffry de Mandeville holds ten hides in Caningeham of the King. Land for sixteen ploughs. Now in demesne four ploughs, four slaves : nineteen villani, with ten bordarii, having twelve ploughs. There is a mill worth forty-four pence : also a hundred and nine acres of meadow, and thirty-three acres of pasture. It used to be worth twelve pounds, now fifteen pounds.¹

The terse language of the great inquest gives us an adequate picture of Kingham and its land in the year 1086—all of it, that is, which was in any sense taxable.² There may have been persons living in the village who do not appear in the record, and there may have been land as yet unreclaimed which was within its ecclesiastical boundary, or land appropriated to the church which was exempt from taxation ; but we have here everything that was essential to the community, the

¹ 'Goisfridus de Manneville tenet x hidas in Caningeham de rege : terra xvi carucis : nunc in dominio iiii carucae iiii servi : xix villani cum x bordariis habent xii carucas. Ibi molendinum de xliiii denariis : cix acrae prati xxxiii acrae pasturae. Valuit xii lb. modo xv lb.'

² Vinogradoff, *Villainage in England*, p. 240 foll.

Church alone excepted. Let us see what it has to tell us of the land and the people working on it.

The first entry, that of the ten hides, does not help us much, for the hide, as all authorities are now agreed, was a unit not of area but of assessment, and assessment bore no ratio to area or to actual value in a manor or vill:¹ and the number ten is a good round number constantly recurring all through Domesday. Geoffrey de Mandeville, to whom William had granted land in no less than eleven different counties,² would have to raise so much on ten hides at Kingham when the king called for it; which was only too clear to *him*, but tells *us* nothing certain of the tax-paying capacity of the community. But the three Latin words that follow, translated, 'land for sixteen ploughs,' would give the Conqueror and his officials a better idea of what Kingham might be worth to them; and in this way they also help us. They suggest, like all such entries in the survey, that William, like a Chancellor of the Exchequer at the present day, wished to know what *undeveloped* land there was here, and what might be made of it.³ This needs a few words of explanation.

¹ See e.g. Round, *Feudal England*, 63 foll.

² Round, *Geoffrey de Mandeville*, p. 37.

³ This was an inference of my own from the entries in the Oxfordshire Domesday, but I see that Maitland puts it in the same way, *Domesday Book and Beyond*, p. 422, 'What King William really wants to know is the agricultural capacity of the tenement. . . . With an eye to future taxation, he wishes for figures expressive of the normal condition of things.' He adds, however, that this normal condition of things, according to ideas of the time, would be equivalent to the condition in King Edward's reign.

'Land (sufficient for, or needing the work of) sixteen ploughs.' If we knew what a 'ploughland' was in area, we could multiply it by sixteen, and thus arrive at the area of possible arable at Kingham; but alas, this is just what we do not know for certain. What, so to speak, was the *power* of a plough? There is hardly a doubt that the ploughs in demesne, those working on the lord's land, were drawn by eight oxen,¹ and hardly less certain that the people in the village not attached specially to the demesne, the *villani* that is, combined to make their teams up to the same power, so that all the sixteen may be taken as of eight oxen each. One yoke of oxen would therefore be a quarter of the whole team; and this was apparently the most common contribution of a well-to-do *villanus*. A yoke was the quarter of a team, and was reckoned to plough in a season about thirty acres, or a virgate, which was the Norman word for that famous English one which survived in Kingham till the enclosure of 1850—I mean 'yardland'.²

This virgate or yardland was usually reckoned as thirty acres, more or less, in our neighbourhood, for we have well authenticated examples of it thus reckoned, only a few miles away, at Hooknorton.³ And thus

¹ Vinogradoff sums up the evidence in *Growth of the Manor*, 201 foll. Maitland's arguments seem to me convincing: *Domesday Book and Beyond*, p. 414.

² See below, p. 55, note 2, and cp. Round, *Feudal England*, p. 108; Maitland, *Domesday Book and Beyond*, p. 384 foll.

³ See the *English Register of Oseney Abbey* (written about 1460), Early English Text Society, ed. A. Clark, pp. 168 and 190, where the items are

the entire ploughland must be reckoned at about 120 acres more or less, i.e. a team of eight oxen could plough in a season that amount of arable land, if they were good beasts, in good condition, and if the soil were not too heavy. But here we meet with a difficulty. According to this reckoning there must have been no less than 1,920 acres of arable here (120 multiplied by 16): and this actually under cultivation in 1086; for the entry goes on to say that there were sixteen ploughs, four in demesne and twelve others, and we must suppose, since nothing is said to the contrary, that they were all really provided with teams and capable of work. In many neighbouring villages Domesday tells us that the number of ploughs was not equal to the amount of land open to them: e.g. Churchill had twenty ploughlands and only eleven ploughs and teams: but here in Kingham it looks as if there were really sixteen ploughs, working with no less than 128 oxen on sixteen ploughlands, and if a ploughland be 120 acres, they were cultivating an area larger in amount than the whole of the present parish, 1,920 acres as against the 1,876 of the present day, which include not only arable but all the land of every kind. What are we to make of this?

One thing is quite certain, that Kingham was a most prosperous village; but the reason of this is beyond

given which make up respectively a yardland and a half yardland. But in the *Godstow Nunnery Register* I find a yardland at Great Tew, which in the thirteenth century only amounted to about twenty acres, and one at Eastrop near Highworth of little more (p. 614).

our vision. Even if we could reckon the ploughs not in demesne, but belonging to the *villani* and *bordarii*, as worked by teams of *four* instead of eight (which is most unlikely),¹ we should have an arable of 1,200 acres. Another possibility is that the Kingham land of that day exceeded in extent the limits of the present parish; but if you survey the whole parish of to-day from such a spot as Boulter's barn, on the road to Chipping Norton, and note how obviously it forms a whole, falling within fairly well defined natural limits, it is hard to see how there can have been any great difference between the area of 1086 and that of 1912. There remains the possibility that the ploughland here was less than 120 acres, as indeed, it undoubtedly was in many places, e.g. Great Tew, though we have seen that at Hooknorton it was 120, i.e. four yardlands of 30 each. Supposing we reckon it as 100 here, we get a total of arable area of 1,600, which, with the 39 acres of meadow and pasture of which the survey tells us, and the site of the village itself, say 10 acres, would come to about 1,750, which is not far short of the area of the present parish. On the whole, this is the best explanation that I can suggest.²

¹ Professor Vinogradoff at one time seems to have thought this possible. See his *Villainage in England*, p. 252. I gather from his later work, *The Growth of the Manor*, that he does not hold this view any longer.

² There is also the possibility that the acre here was not the full acre of 220 yards by 22 yards. An acre was the amount that could be ploughed in a forenoon, and this amount varied. See the delightful treatment of this question in Maitland's *Domesday Book and Beyond*, p. 374 foll., from which more may be learnt than elsewhere.

But however we are to explain it, it is clear that the industry of the inhabitants or the energy of their lords, in the course of the five centuries (more or less) since the first settlement, had so largely increased the area of arable as to include the whole of the four quarters which we see in the map. If I was right in assuming that Ryeworth was the oldest of these quarters, they must have worked out towards Daylesford to begin with, then up the hill over Withcombe and Broadmoor, and finally down the eastern slopes of the hill to Brookside quarter.

The population working this large arable appears in Domesday as only thirty-three; but we may perhaps reckon in a priest and a steward, and giving most of them families, we might guess at a population of about 200. We can now boast of more than 800, with an acreage hardly larger than in Domesday; but we have far more workers in the parish than the land needs for cultivation, and many of these are employed in other ways. We have, for example, several railway men, for Kingham station has become a junction of some importance in my time; and Kingham Hill, formerly the upper part of Broadmoor quarter, has in the last thirty years become conspicuous to all the country round by its fine buildings forming the orphanage 'Homes' of the Squire of Daylesford.

Of the thirty-three workers of Domesday, four were slaves belonging to the demesne, housed, no doubt, in the buildings of the home farm. Nineteen were *villani*,

i.e. component parts of the vill or manor, each of them no doubt having his one or two virgates or yardlands made up of strips in the open field, which he held of the lord in return for services rendered by custom on the lord's demesne. These *villani* lived in the village itself, as our farmers do to this day; and each of them had a yard, or toft, as well as his house, and a barn for storing his corn; and his share in the fields brought him also a right of pasture on the common, or waste. Then came the ten *bordarii*, a curious term used by the Domesday surveyors to mean men having a *borda* or croft, attached to their cottages, usually without shares in the plough-teams and the arable.¹ Presumably, they were of later origin than the true shareholders, allowed to settle here by the lord or his bailiff. They must have had work to do in the fields, in return for which they were allowed a croft or garden allotment; possibly we owe to them, or to the lord who let them settle there, our second street, now the main thoroughfare of the village; for at the backs of the houses here are a series of crofts of good land running down to the mill-stream and the Yantell meadow, which

¹ See a succinct account of the *bordarii* and their condition in Vinogradoff's *Growth of the Manor*, p. 338, which is followed by another dealing with the *villani*, where an attempt is made to find the old-English equivalent or equivalents for the Norman terms thus introduced by Domesday. For *bordarii*, see also the same learned author's *Villainage in England*, p. 148, and Andrews's *English Manor*, p. 170 foll. Also Maitland, *Domesday Book and Beyond*, p. 38 foll., where the view taken is that the *bordarius* might have strips in the arable as well as the *villanus*; and this I believe to have been true of Kingham.

certainly never formed part of the arable of the four quarters.¹

Before we leave Domesday, we must ask where were the mill, the hundred-and-nine acres of hay-meadow, and the thirty-three acres of pasture. As to the mill, it is there still to speak for itself. It is not the Evenlode that turns it, for that water-power was occupied by the Gloucestershire village of Bledington, but the brook that runs into the Evenlode just below us, with a volume of water just sufficient for the purpose. One would like to know how the men of Bledington came to have the advantage of us in this respect:² whether they were the earlier settlement, or the stronger or more enterprising. Familiar as I am with the marvellous inventive faculty of the Roman annalists, it would be easy for me to tell a thrilling story about this, if my readers were likely to be any the better for it.

Where, in the next place, were the 109 acres of meadow for hay? Churchill had no less than 170, i.e. land along the Evenlode beyond our railway station, and land along the brook which divides the two parishes. Kingham naturally had the land along the Evenlode *above* the station, and that on our side of the brook,

¹ These bits of land are known as 'backsides' in the village now, and the term is an old one, for I find it in the terrier of 1639 applied to one of these crofts adjoining my own premises.

² This advantage remains with them. Our mill, still the property of the lord of the manor (New College, Oxford), maintains itself rather as 'Kingham Mill Inn' than as Kingham mill.

which has always borne the name of the Yantell.¹ The difference in acreage is easily accounted for: the Churchill land on the Evenlode is further down than ours, where the stream is larger and the valley wider. Ours is but a narrow fringe of meadow liable to flood (and under water as I write this, in the terribly wet summer of 1912), but running a full mile up the valley from the station. In one part of this, at least, the farmers used to cast lots for the piece they were to mow, and then feast with their labourers at Dining Acres. Here, too, we find the very ancient word *varndel*, i.e. farden-dal, farthing-dole, which means the quarter of an acre which each farmer was entitled to mow after receiving his lot.² In one of my old deeds it is called 'one man's math in the mead'. Thus Kingham was well off for hay; but the demand for it was probably not so great as at present, for horses were few, and the work of ploughing, as we have seen, was done by oxen, for whose wants the pasture-land and the fallow of the third (or fourth) field, would ordinarily suffice.

Lastly, where were the thirty-three acres of pasture? By these I suppose we are to understand the 'waste' land on which both lord and villagers had common of pasture. If so, we know where to place them. In the

¹ The exact meaning of this word is not known to me; I cannot find it in lists of field names. There is a Yantle creek on the Essex bank of the Thames below London.

² See Kennett, *Parochial Antiquities*, Glossary s.v.; and for a similar custom and name at Chippenham, Gomme, *Village Community*, p. 179.

present village green, and the March common to the north-east, and perhaps some part of the Back Closes to the north-west, we shall easily find thirty-three acres of grass land suitable for cattle and such sheep as were here. I doubt, however, whether sheep were ever abundant on this manor. We know that they were bred in large numbers by the neighbouring Cistercian Abbey of Bruern, but I find no trace of them in the nomenclature of our parish, which is not, indeed, very well suited to their needs. Yet we must not forget that sheep-breeding was destined to be the basis of England's future greatness, and that, as Professor Vinogradoff tells us,¹ 'we hear (i.e. in old charters) a good deal about obligations to use folds for sheep, and there can be no doubt that the meaning of them must be sought in the value of the manure.' In the terrier of 1639 there is mention of common of pasture and feeding for 280 sheep.

It is nearly two hundred years before we get another glimpse of life at Kingham, in the Hundred Rolls of Edward I, of which the date is 1279. With this I must close my account; for our later history, if it is ever to be traced, must be pieced together from documents as yet neither printed nor deciphered. The entry in the Rolls (vol. i, p. 737) is too long to be quoted here in full, but it is in substance as follows.

The manor is held by the heirs of William de Mandeville from the Earl of Hereford as one knight's fee, and the earl holds it of the king. These heirs have

¹ *Growth of the Manor*, p. 181.

sixteen virgates of land in demesne, each worth twenty shillings a year. Then follow the names of twenty-one villani, each holding a virgate, with the exception of one who holds half a virgate, or a bovate, as it was often called as representing the land ploughable by a single ox. These villani, in the course of the two centuries since Domesday, have commuted their services on the lord's land for a money payment, and pay the owners (as we may now call them) sixteen shillings each as rent for their virgates. This was apparently a high rate, for the reason is explicitly added that their profits as virgate holders have risen far beyond the value of their labour and customary services.¹ Besides these we have the names of six holders of cottages (*cotagia*), paying in all eleven shillings and sixpence: in these cases no land is mentioned, and they probably had none that was worth money. Lastly come the names of twenty-three *liberi tenentes*,² men who held their land by a tenure free from all burden, whether of service or payment, the owners only retaining their hold on the land by exacting a nominal quit-rent, which in some instances is a pound of pepper. The only exceptions to this freedom from obligation are the village smith, who has to make four ploughs yearly free of cost, and the miller, John of the Mill, who pays twenty shillings and elevenpence for the

¹ The reader may consult the *Victoria History of Oxfordshire*, vol. ii, p. 174, for the importance of the process of which this is an item.

² For the *liberi tenentes*, see Vinogradoff, *Villainage in England*, p. 323 foll., and *Growth of the Manor*, p. 342 foll.

right of holding his important position. Among the cottagers there is one who holds on these free terms; and there are two virgates belonging to the Prior of Hurley Priory, near Henley,¹ which are, of course, also free of rent or service.

The virgates in demesne are sixteen: twenty and a half are held by villani: and the *liberi tenentes* hold about seventeen more, some having two, some one, and others fractional parts. The whole number of virgates, including the two of the Prior of Hurley, is about fifty-five; and if we are to reckon the ploughland here at 100 acres, and therefore the virgate at about twenty-five, as we did on page 29 above, we should arrive at 1,375 acres of arable as compared with the 1,600 of Domesday: which is somewhat puzzling. The population has increased from thirty-three to forty-six, and the value from £15 to £37 4s. 2d.; and these facts conclusively show that Kingham has been doing well and prospering. What then can have brought about a decrease in the arable? If the figures are correct, I can only account for it by supposing that a certain amount of the original arable had been made into pasture in the course of two centuries; perhaps that ancient ploughland of which I spoke in the last chapter, lying in what appears in the map as the Back Closes, had already been fenced in for pasture. The arable of Domesday was out of proportion to the amount of pasture and

¹ This priory had been founded by Geoffrey de Mandeville II; see Round's *Geoffrey de Mandeville*, p. 38. Hence the connexion with Kingham.

hay-meadow, even if we take into account the feed on the fallow; and since then it is quite possible that an enterprising community, such as Kingham undoubtedly was, had found it advisable to provide more and better pasture for the plough-teams at a convenient proximity to the village. 'In regard to the plough-oxen, pasture near at hand was a necessity during the ploughing seasons, stretching over a good deal of the year. It would have been out of the question to send the oxen to distant pasturage in the intervals between the workdays on the strips.'¹ For this same reason it is possible, I think, that the Upper Common, lying far away by Cornwell parish, may have been once ploughed, but now turned into 'waste', to serve as pasture for the beasts when ploughing at this remote part of the manor. Perhaps, too, the importance of sheep for manuring purposes was being realized; and at a time when the volume of the wool trade was constantly increasing,² some provision may have been made for their accommodation by letting the top of White Quar Hill, with the sweet short grass still to be found there, resume its natural condition. But I must allow that all this is purely conjectural; we know far less about the pasture than we do about the arable.

¹ Vinogradoff, *Growth of the Manor*, p. 180. The question of the decrease of arable is fully discussed by Maitland, *Domesday Book and Beyond*, p. 436 foll.

² For a sketch of the history of the wool trade in England, see Ashley, *Economic History*, I, chap. iii. At the time of the Hundred Rolls, England had almost a monopoly of the wool supply of Europe.

The land has greatly increased in value ; as we have seen, it is now worth more than double what it was in Domesday. And it is noticeable that in this respect it is more than on a par with other villages round us. It happens that Mr. Seebohm selected six of our villages to illustrate the increase in the value of land as indicated in the Hundred Rolls ;¹ and in this little table Kingham takes the second place in progress and enterprise. The most striking increase is at Ascot-under-Wychwood, five miles down the valley, which has risen from £8 to £32 ; but this may be the result of new assarts (clearings for cultivation) in the forest of Wychwood.

But at Kingham the most striking change is in the population, and not so much in its numbers as in its condition. The total number of workers is now forty-six, as against the thirty-three of Domesday ; and if we add the steward of the manor, and perhaps one or two more, we may count it as fifty heads of families, or some 250 in all. The Black Death, which ravaged the country in the next century, must have greatly diminished this number ; Oxfordshire, hitherto a prosperous county, suffered like other parts of the country, and we happen to know that at Woodeaton, near Oxford, 'scarce two tenants remained in the manor, and they would have departed had not the Abbot of Eynsham made an agreement with them.'² This terrible scourge was followed by economic changes which favoured the interests of the landholders rather than the 'workers' ; and it is

¹ Seebohm, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

² *Victoria History*, p. 178.

probable that for some centuries Kingham was never again so prosperous as it was in the thirteenth.

Looking at the details of the population, the first thing we notice is that the four slaves of Domesday have disappeared, as almost everywhere else. They belonged, as seems probable, to the demesne, and the bailiff in charge of this demesne would have good reasons for preferring to use the labour of men who were not captives or criminals or descended from such. It is curious that the number of villani now exactly equals that of the villani and slaves of Domesday taken together: but it would hardly be safe to conjecture that the liberated descendants of the four slaves had found admission to the shareholding of the manorial system. The number of cotters, who were called bordarii in Domesday, and are now described as holding cotagia, have diminished from nine to six. On the other hand, we have no less than nine *liberi tenentes* who are new to the village since Domesday: and it is to these, we may suppose, that we may ascribe in great measure the increased prosperity of the community.

The origin of these 'free tenants' has been fully discussed by Professor Vinogradoff on the basis of ancient documents and legal writings.¹ I will here only refer to one of his explanations, which has also been recognized by Seebohm. Remembering that the lord of the manor was often, if not usually, non-resident, we can easily understand how it came to be the practice

¹ *Villainage in England*, p. 323 foll.

to carve out of his demesne a portion sufficient for the maintenance of some servant who had rendered good service in the management of the estate. 'Grants of domanial land occur commonly in return for services rendered in the administration of the manor; reeves, ploughmen, herdsmen, woodwards, are sometimes recompensed in this manner instead of being released from the duties incumbent on their holding. A small rent was usually affixed to the plot severed from the demesne, and the whole arrangement may be regarded as very like an ordinary lease.' In this way the demesne land, we may notice, would steadily tend to diminish; the manor in fact, in the older sense of the word, is beginning to break up. Early in the fourteenth century it seems to have fallen into two parts, of which one eventually became the property of New College, Oxford. The Warden and Fellows still claim to be lords of the manor, and the Warden occasionally visits us on 'progress' as it is called; but when the parish was enclosed in 1850, the manor, i.e. the leasehold and copyhold properties, only amounted to about 600 acres out of 1,877, and at the present moment it is considerably less than this. In 1639 the terrier I have more than once mentioned sums up the 'manor of Kingham, then belonging to Anthony Gisberne Esquire', as only about 160 acres: but this is probably another portion of it, as the document clearly distinguishes it from 'the colledge land'. It includes the mill and the Yantell, and as these are now college property, Mr. Gisberne

must have sold his portion to the college, which thus once more united the manor. But meanwhile, many small freeholds had been created, which remain to this day; and the total freehold acreage under the allotment was not less than a thousand acres.

There is one most important factor in the early life of Kingham, of which so far I have said nothing at all—I mean our church. Had we a church at all before the fourteenth century, to which the present church belongs? Unlike the neighbouring church of Bledington, which is in every way far more interesting, ours has not a fragment either of Norman or Early English work to show us: the tower is Perpendicular, and the rest Decorated of the fourteenth century. We do, indeed, happen accidentally to know that there was a church here in the time of Stephen; for Geoffrey de Mandeville, grandson of the man of the same name to whom the Conqueror gave Kingham, granted the church at Kingham, together with many others, including Long Compton and Aynho, to his newly-founded monastery of Walden, at Saffron Walden in Essex, where Geoffrey's castle stood. This was in the year 1136, before this Geoffrey had begun to soil his name and fame by treachery and cruelty. That was the great age for founding monasteries for the benefit of the Church and your own soul: and nothing was more natural than that a great landholder like Geoffrey should take such a step; but we may doubt whether all these churches were actually handed over to the infant monastery at one

swoop. The charter by which Geoffrey's intention was declared still survives,¹ and the king seems to have given his consent to it; but there is some doubt whether the necessary consent of the bishop was obtained in the case of Kingham at least.

There are three reasons why we should be cautious in taking this charter as evidence for anything more than the existence of a church here in 1136. First, Mr. Round, in his book on this Geoffrey de Mandeville, has proved that the monks of Walden were most unscrupulous and careless in their methods of writing chronicles, and recording the story of their foundation; we need, therefore, to proceed cautiously in dealing with a document that gave them more than twenty churches, i.e. the presentations to these churches, with all the tithes and every scrap of property belonging to them. And secondly, there is no mention to be found of Kingham as other than a *rectory*: and a rectory it could not have been, anyhow after the twelfth century, if it had been in the possession of a monastery—it must have been a vicarage. I have been kindly informed by the Rev. H. Salter, who knows more about the ecclesiastical history of Oxfordshire than any one,² that in the rolls of the bishops of Lincoln (in whose diocese we then were) he can find no institution to Kingham till 1260, but that in that year there was a *rector*, and

¹ Printed in Dugdale's *Monasticon*, iv. 133 foll.

² See his long and valuable contribution to this subject in the *Victoria History of Oxfordshire*, vol. ii.

again in 1267 and 1274. Again, he writes: 'I looked at the Bodleian at MS. Top. Oxon. (C. 55) to see if it gave institutions of rectors or vicars to Kingham after May 1318, up to which time there is only mention of rectors: but I could find neither rector nor vicar.' Thirdly, there seems to have been a grant of the churches of Kingham and Aynho by the family of Mandeville to the abbey of Walden in 1318, under Edward II:¹ and if this be correct, as I think it must be, the original grant of Geoffrey can surely not have taken effect.

But it may be doubted whether even this last attempt to appropriate us was really successful. Mr. Salter tells me that he does not find the rectory in the possession of the abbey either in 1460 or in 1523, in which years subsidies were collected in Oxfordshire, of which the details survive; nor at the dissolution of the monastery. It thus looks probable that even the second impropriation of 1318 was never carried out, and that Kingham has always been a rectory, as it is now.

There are, however, two small items of evidence which point the other way, and as both are interesting to a Kingham antiquarian, I will just mention them. First, there is a certain spot of land in the village which, in the Enclosure award of 1850, is three or four times over called *Vicarage Close* (or closes), though in that document the living is always a Rectory and the parson always a Rector. How can the word Vicarage have

¹ Patent Letters, 10 & 11 Edw. II. I am indebted to the Rev. S. Spencer Pearce for this reference.

crept into a document which bears obvious witness to the exactness bestowed on the nomenclature of the parish by the Commissioner who drew it up? The bit of land in question was formerly glebeland, and was exchanged with New College under the award; it lies immediately to the south-west of the old manor-house and its garden. I have sometimes been tempted to fancy that this old house may have been preceded by one which was really a vicarage, at some period when the living was in the hands of a monastery, and that the tradition of this fact survives in the name of this rickyard. But on the other hand, it is quite possible that the word may be simply the blunder of the Commissioner or his assistants. Still, it is worth mention.

The other little fact is this. After the dissolution of the monasteries, the first vacancy in our living seems to have raised the question as to who was the patron. My friend and old pupil, the Rev. S. Spencer Pearce, Vicar of Combe, has sent me an extract from the Institution books of Oxford diocese, which begin when the diocese was carved out of that of Lincoln in 1546: from this extract it appears that on July 2, 1555, Leonard Bowden was instituted to the living of 'Keyngham', in succession to Stephen Haraude, by the presentation of John Smyth of Walden in the county of Essex, who claimed this right in succession to that of the recently dissolved abbey of Walden. Had the abbey then been enjoying the right of presentation? If so, it must have been a right almost devoid of financial benefit, for the

only 'spirituale' drawn by the abbey from Kingham at the dissolution was a 'pensio' of one pound.¹

But I must leave these obscure questions to some one who will be able to spend more time and eyesight upon them. After all, they are not of great importance in our history. What would we not give for a single letter or even a single sermon, of a Rector of Kingham in those ancient days? or for some record of the way in which the services were conducted, and in which the shepherd looked after his sheep? But the Christian life which we may hope was lived here, even in the darkest days of the later Middle Ages, is entirely hidden from us, and can never be recovered.

NOTE ON THE LATER HISTORY OF THE LIVING OF KINGHAM

After the dissolution of the monastery of Walden, the living, as we saw, was filled up on presentation by John Smyth of Walden (who claimed the right as conceded to him by the last abbot) of Leonard Bowden, rector, not vicar. He died in 1557 and was succeeded by George Marbury, who seems also to have had the living of Chipping Norton: his institution is not in the diocesan register, and I do not know who was the patron on that

¹ Dugdale, *Monasticon*, iv. 153. The following, from the *Oxford Diocesan Register*, vol. i, p. 162, is worth quoting, as showing the confusion which must often have arisen in presentations after the dissolution: 'ad praesentationem Iohannis Smyth de Walden in comitatu Essex, senioris, veri et indubitati (ut asserit) dictae ecclesiae pro hac vice patroni ratione concessionis advocacionis per Iohannem nuper Abbatem'.

occasion. (This may perhaps be found in the registers of the Archbishops of Canterbury.) But Marbury lived only a year as rector, dying on November 11, 1558. On this same day, according to the Oxford register, Ralph Willat was instituted: there must, however, I think, be a mistake in the date. This man was already vicar of Shipton-under-Wychwood, but resigned that living in 1564. Ralph Willat accepted the Elizabethan settlement, and remained rector till his death in 1574 or 1575. His will is extant in the records of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury (57, Pickering).

Another Kingham will may be introduced here in full, which belongs to the year 1555, in which year Stephen Haraude died and was succeeded by Leonard Bowden. Bowden apparently appointed a curate, and was perhaps non-resident: the will is that of this curate, Morris Lewis (*curati di Kenkham*), *Oxon. Wills*, S. i, vol. iv.

‘ In the name of God amen the xxth of the moneth of Novembre the yere of our lorde god 1555 the second and thyrde yere of the reyne of our most dread soverayne lord and ladie Philippe and Marie by the grace of god Kynge and Quene of England Fraunce Naples Jerusaleme Ireland Defender of the Faith princes of Spain and Sicell archduke of Austrye Dukes of Milan (?) Burgundy and Brabant Countes of halfburge (i. e. Hapsburg) Fflanders and Tiroll: I Mores Lewes preiste and curate of Kenkham in the countie of Oxford beying in whole mynde and of good memorye make this my present testament and last wyll in maner and formes following: ffyrste I commende and bequethe my sowle to God

allmightie and our blessed ladie saynte Marye and to all the sayntes in heaven they to pray for me and with me and my bodie to be buryed in the churche yarde of Kenkham or els where it shall please God. Then I gyve and b. to Margaret my sister the xiiis iiid that Mr Powell oweth to me and also the vs that Owen aphugh oweth to me: then I gyve and b. to every one of my godchildren xii: then I g. & b. to Richard Mores my brother the ffortie shillings that he oweth to me: then that my executor shall delyer to Mr Parson of Chastylton immediatlye after my decease vis viiid he to have xii thereof to say dirige and masse for my sowle and the rest to dispose amonge the porest of his parisshe. Then I wyll that he in lyke maner to have for his paynes xiid thereof & the rest thereof to be disposed among his poore parishioners: also I wyll that my executor shall delyver to the parson of Daylesford other syxe shillinges eightpence he to saye dirige and masse for my sowle and to have thereof xiid for his paynes and the rest thereof he to dispose hit among his poore parishioners. Then I wyll that my executor shall one whole yere nexte after my decease kepe evr'y moneth dirige and masse for my sowle in Castleton Churche. Then the rest of my goodes not bequeathed above in my wyll I gyve and bequeath theym to Owen Lewes cosen whom I make my trew executor he to bryne me honestlie to the ground he to paye my dettes and he to dispose and use all my other goodes not bequeathed as he shall thinke best to God's pleasure as to his own profyte.

Wytnessithe Sr Thomas Barnbrocke pson of Adylstrop Sr Richard Ireland pson of Daylysford Henry Ffarrande (or Harraude?) Kenkham with others.'

Philip had left England about two months when this will was made: and did not return during Mary's lifetime.

The juxtaposition of this magnificent person with all his titles and the plain Welsh curate Morris Lewis is striking. Welsh Mr. Lewis certainly was, like Sir Hugh Evans in the *Merry Wives*, though well established on English soil; his friends are a Powell and an Aphugh. I note that he spells Kingham, Kenkham, and probably pronounced it so, the *g* being distinctly sounded in the border counties still. Lastly I note that he calls the neighbouring priests by the old clerical title of Sir or Ser, and was doubtless himself called Ser Mores Lewes.

To continue the story of the living: on the death of Ralph Willat he was succeeded by William James S.T.P. on July 12, 1575. Willat had been presented by Sir George Norton & Elizabeth Awdeley his wife 'nuper relictæ domini Thomas Awdeley de Walden patronorum dicte ecclesie',¹ and the advowson came to Lady Awdeley as the widow of Sir Thomas Awdeley (Baron Awdeley of Walden), to whom the Abbey of Walden with all its estates and advowson rights had been granted in 1538 (but the next presentation had been sold by the abbey to John Smythe, as we have seen). William James, however, was appointed by the Crown, 'ad petitionem et commendationem Doctoris Pyers, Canon of Ch. Ch., and preacher at St. Paul's of the Thanksgiving sermon for the defeat of the Armada in 1588.' From the same document that gives us this information (Lansdowne MS., 443 and 229) we learn that the value of the living was £18 11s. 8d. My friend the Rev. A. Clark, Rector of Great

¹ *Oxon. Dioc. Register*, i. 190.

Leighs, Chelmsford, to whom I applied to help me in elucidating the connexion between Kingham and the Essex abbey, tells me that the Crown presentation was probably by wardship of Lord Thomas Howard, son of the Duke of Norfolk beheaded 1572, inheritor of his mother's (Margaret Audley's) Walden estate. But 'lapse' is also possible in this case, as the see of Oxford was vacant for twenty-one years at this time; this, however, was only when the patron did not appoint during a vacancy of the see.

This Dr. William James, Dean of Christ Church, has left us the only tangible documentary evidence of a rector's existence that our church possesses before the seventeenth century. There is a brass, fixed within what I believe to be an 'Easter sepulchre' in the chancel, to the memory of Katharine James, wife of William James, Doctor of Divinity, and parson of this church: she died September 14, 1588 (just after the Armada), and is described as his wife, not widow, so that he must himself have put up this monument. She is represented on this brass kneeling, with her three sons behind her. She was thirty-eight years of age when she died, and is described as a mirror of womanhood in verses which, though hardly worth transcribing here, are above the average of their kind, as might be expected from a Dean of Christ Church.

After this I know nothing of the rectors till 1646, when our registers begin: there the first rector mentioned is Thomas Jackson. The living was bought in 1664 by

William Dowdeswell, D.C.L. : but he retained his own living of Brinkworth until his death in 1673 (except when he was deprived of it during the civil war). The vendors of the living were Sir Richard Berkeley and Thomas Croft, of whom I know nothing. Evidently the living had been sold by some member of the Howard family, to which it had descended from the Audleys : Lord Thomas Howard, who was a minor when the Crown presented Dr. James, was the last patron in direct descent, so to speak, from the de Mandevilles through the Abbey of Walden and the family to whom its advowsons were given at the Dissolution. The son of this William Dowdeswell succeeded to the living as soon as he was old enough to be ordained, i.e. in 1678 ; and in 1688 he built the present rectory house, as his monument in the church shows. He was succeeded in 1711 by another William Dowdeswell, who was then only twenty-three. He had no son, but was succeeded by his son-in-law, Dr. Robert Foley in 1750, who became Dean of Worcester, and has a monument in the church. Another son-in-law was Rev. Ed. C. Lockwood, of Dews Hall, Essex, whose son, in default of Dowdeswells, became Rector of Kingham in 1783 : from him the Kingham Lockwoods are descended.¹ But it seems that this first Lockwood of Kingham found the air of Kingham too keen for him, and made an arrangement by which he

¹ My information as to the Dowdeswells is due to the kindness of my friend, H. Lockwood, Esq., who obtained it from the present representative of this Worcestershire family.

exchanged the living with Rev. C. Western in 1784, who remained rector till 1836, and is still remembered by our oldest inhabitant, Mrs. Cooper, aged ninety-seven. (See below p. 86 for a story about him.) This carries us back a long way: Mrs. Cooper remembers a man who was Rector of Kingham before the French Revolution, and who must have been born in the reign of George II. It is also worth remark that the last three rectors covered together no less than a hundred and twenty-seven years, from 1784 to 1911.

The children of Mr. Western are described in the baptismal register as being children of Charles and Mary Peniston Western: and he was careful to insert this name of Peniston in each case, adding it over the line on the first occasion. I make no doubt, therefore, that Mrs. Western was of the very old family of Penistons, lords of the manor of the adjacent village of Cornwell, and that Mr. Western's connexion with Kingham originated in this way.

Additional Note (see p. 49). Dr. James died in 1601, and was succeeded as Rector by George Morecrofte, who died after sequestration by the Parliament in 1646 (*Lords' Journals*, ix. 388). Thomas Jackson was the next Rector, as stated on p. 49. Thus the list of Rectors is complete from 1555. I owe these additional facts to the Rev. S. Spencer Pearce.

CHAPTER III

STUDY OF THE KINGHAM ENCLOSURE AWARD

CHRISTMAS EVE, 1850, was a great day in the history of our village; but no one now knows that this was so, and if I do not make haste to tell about it the fact will soon be utterly forgotten. On that day Mr. John Davis, Commissioner, read aloud, to all interested persons who chose to come and hear him, the award, just completed, by which the parish was converted from the old system of agricultural economy to that which we now enjoy, in common with almost every other rural parish in England. I can find no one now who remembers the event; my old informants have passed away, and old Mrs. Cooper, our oldest inhabitant, who celebrated her ninety-sixth birthday last Sunday (July 28, 1912), cannot be got to fix her mind on events of this kind, and very probably never realized their importance. Thus I cannot say where the award was read, or who came to listen to it. But that is a small matter: the important thing is that during the next year or two the old furlongs, strips, meres, and common pastures, vanished utterly from the surface of the parish, and nothing is left to remind us of them but the ridge and

furrow of which I have already spoken. In their place we have compact farms of arable and pasture combined, the hay as before lying mostly away in the alluvial meadows. Every one owning strips or any right of common received under the award an equivalent in the new system, whether his land were freehold or copyhold, i.e. outside the manor or within it; and the final announcement of all this apportionment was made that winter day, after which, no doubt, Mr. John Davis drove back to Banbury, conscious of having performed a difficult task honourably, and of a good sum of money coming to him for his pains. He made two copies of his award, one of which is now in the custody of Mr. G. Phillips, the rate-collector, the other being in the office of the County Surveyor at Oxford. Both these are occasionally referred to for information as to the history of a property, or the rules of fencing it: but the one in the village was lent to me for some time in the short days of last winter, and together with its interesting map gave me a good deal to think about. It happened that just at this time two books came out on the history and effects of enclosures,¹ and quickened my interest in the subject. Those who wish to know something of enclosure in the concrete may find what little I have to say of some interest in connexion with these works.

¹ *The Village Labourer*, 1760-1832, by J. L. and B. Hammond (1911), an interesting but rather one-sided statement of the case against enclosing; and *Common Land and Enclosure*, by Professor Gonner (1912), a strictly scientific inquiry into the progress of the movement.

My main object was to discover whether the award was a just one to all classes.

To begin with, who was this Commissioner, to whom a power apparently so arbitrary was entrusted, and how did he proceed in the performance of the work? As a rule there were three commissioners, sometimes more, as in the case of Winfrith in Dorset (1768), given in *The Village Labourer*, p. 389: but experience seems to have shown that one man of undoubted impartiality could do the work more efficiently. Mr. John Davis of Banbury, from all I can hear of him, was a highly honourable man, and well skilled in this kind of work. He had already been Commissioner both at Neat Enstone and Church Enstone, as I learn from Jordan's *History of Enstone*, pp. 290 and 292; and Mr. Jordan mentions no dissatisfaction in those parishes, nor have I ever heard of any here. He had, of course, to take an oath that he would discharge his duties 'faithfully, impartially and honestly, according to the best of my skill and judgement . . . without favour or affection, prejudice or partiality'. This oath was twice taken: first in 1843, and again in 1845, in which year an Act of Parliament provided for the establishment of permanent central commissioners (afterwards embodied in the Board of Agriculture), and the new arrangement (as I suppose) made a fresh oath necessary. Mr. Davis was not interested in the parish, though it happens that a namesake of his, also John Davis, was among the persons affected by the award. I do not

know whether Mr. R. Davis, who wrote the agricultural report of Oxfordshire in 1798,¹ and who was at one time engaged in no less than sixteen enclosures, was father or grandfather of John, but think it highly probable.

The work consisted, apart from the actual transference of land, of a survey and a valuation, and for these purposes specialists were probably employed. The survey was simple, being only an accurate map of the parish as it then was, with the old system of strips and furlongs, &c., and of all the houses and other buildings in the village itself. The valuation was much more difficult, and called for an expert skilled in the knowledge of soils relatively to their adaptation for crops and cattle. The object was not to ascertain the value under the old system, which could be estimated from the rent-rolls, but the prospective value under the new system of farming: it was therefore largely guesswork, but guesswork based on ascertained facts. The hypothetical character of it is seen in the fact that the old holdings, consisting of strips scattered over the various furlongs, are reckoned in the award as *yardlands* or fractions of yardlands, and as every one knows who has looked into these matters, the yardland was a very uncertain amount.² It was supposed to be the quarter of a hide,

¹ See Gonner's book, p. 89 foll.

² The question of the origin, meaning, and size of the yardland is an extremely difficult one. See Round, *Feudal England*, p. 108; Vinogradoff, *Growth of the Manor*, p. 159 foll., and p. 175 foll.; and the opening chapter of Gonner's book. It does not seem quite clear whether, as Vinogradoff says, it originally included rights appendant in pasture, woods, &c., or only the

and a hide is usually reckoned at 120 acres: but that it consisted, as a rule, of 30 acres is not in the least likely to have been the case, and the difficulty and expense of measuring and valuing each strip of which a yardland was composed made exact accuracy practically impossible. So the extent of value of the old yardlands had to be guessed at from the rent-roll where there was one, or from any other documents available, and then balanced against a certain amount of compact land under the system that was to be. I presume that practice made a Commissioner and his assistants almost perfect in this difficult work, and it seems to have been done in almost all cases with impartiality.

strips in the arable, as Gonner appears to think (p. 5), with the tenement, or house of the holder. But there is no doubt that at the time of the enclosure it included certain rights of common, i.e. of pasture, fuel, and perhaps of hay, and in what follows it must be borne in mind that the land apportioned a man in lieu of a yardland was meant as an equivalent for these rights as well as for the strips in the open fields. This was another point that made it practically impossible to express the old holdings (yardlands and half yardlands, anciently bovates) in terms of acres. The Commissioner had no definite quantity of land to deal with in each case under the old system, but had to adjust it to a definite quantity of land under the new. The uncertainty as to the acreage of a yardland is well shown in the report of a commission of inquiry in 1587 into the Queen's property in Bensington, Oxon. (Pearman's *History of the Manor of Bensington*, pp. 117 and 121). Among the interrogatories I find: 'how many yardlands there were in the burylands, and of how many acres a yardland consisted'. Some said that the buryland consisted of 24 yardlands, each yardland containing 24 acres, but this acreage, according to others, included the 'Queen's land' as well. At Kingham, in old conveyances, &c., the yardland used to be described as containing 'by estimation', so many acres; e.g. in a deed belonging to a neighbour I find a yardland and a quarter containing, by estimation, 35 acres 25 perches, which would make the yardland in this case about 28 acres.

There had, I believe, been earlier attempts to enclose, of which I know nothing. No doubt there had been opposition, as usual; the smaller owners would stand to lose for a time, as they would have to undertake new fencing,¹ which was relatively more expensive for small holders than for the big ones. They would also have to contribute to the general expenses of the enclosure, which were always considerable. Further, they lost their right of common of pasture on the waste, and in the pasture closes round the village; they had, no doubt, some pasture land allotted them as well as arable, and in the long run all this has turned out well: but at the time it might naturally seem that the small holder's best policy was to resist. The three great owners, New College, Mr. Langston of Sarsden, and the Rector of Kingham (Rev. J. W. Lockwood), on the other hand, would gain greatly in convenience as well as in actual profit, almost from the very start. Value as well as numbers had to be taken into consideration when the parish voted on the proposed scheme, and the necessary consent of two-thirds was duly obtained.

Such a revolution needed, of course, to have the force of Parliament behind it. Up to 1845 each enclosure had been effected by means of a separate Act, and a good deal of jobbery had been done, if we may trust *The Village Labourer*, in getting these Acts passed. But in 1845 a central and permanent Commission was

¹ It was proposed in the general Act of 1796 to exempt the poor from this charge, but without success (*Village Labourer*, p. 98).

established, which controlled all enclosing, and Parliament only interfered in so far as to require the enclosure deeds to lie on the tables of both Houses for a certain time before they were finally allowed validity (Gonner, p. 60). Our award quotes the Acts of 1801, 1836, and 1841 (? 1845). The first of these three was the first general Act embodying the principles of enclosure : it is described in Gonner, p. 56, and *The Village Labourer*, p. 77. That of 1836 was also a general Act, by which *inter alia* a majority of two-thirds in number and value was made necessary for an enclosure.

The first provision in our award, as (I believe) in all others, was for roads.¹ These were both public and private : the private ones were for the benefit of the new farms, and the expenses of these seem to have been divided among those interested. The right of grazing the herbage at their edges belonged to the owners and occupiers adjoining them, and this was so also with the grazing along the public roads. I may note that at the present day this grazing is used without demur on the part of any one by one or two of the smaller farmers ; and it was owing to this habit that I became acquainted with the astonishing perseverance (recorded by me in the *Zoologist*) of a pair of Stonechats, who built successively four nests last season in this wayside grass—in places very difficult to discover—and succeeded in two of their attempts, the first in April and the fourth in July. A humane and intelligent boy, William Nash,

¹ On this subject, see Gonner, p. 84 foll.

in charge of cows on the Lyneham Road, discovered the last three of these nests and watched them with loving care. If he had not been fidgetting about with his stick for hours together by the road-side we might never have heard of this nesting of Stonechats, the first I have ever known at Kingham. But this is a digression.

The public roads simply followed the course of other bridle-roads leading to other villages ; I know of only one change, viz. the suppression of the old piece of road leading into the old street of the village, the course of which is still plainly visible from the Hopper (Jim Pearce's cottage), at the bottom of Bury Close, turning sharp at a right angle further on, just to the west of the present village drain. This must have been a prettier entrance to the village than the present one ; but it was, no doubt, abolished as interfering with the compactness of the rectorial glebe as reconstituted under the award. The result seems to have been that the business of the village gathered in the 'new' street (as I take it to be) to which the new road led directly : here are now all the shops and nurseries, while the far more picturesque old street to the west remains almost as it was for centuries, adorned with pretty old farm-houses and rickyards, and with the quaint gables and the beautiful chimney of the so-called manor-house.¹

These roads had to be well fenced, and one result of this was that the gates which encumbered them were

¹ See Cover of Book.

now removed, as the fencing prevented the cattle from straying on them out of the fields to which they belonged. There are one or two roads in our neighbourhood where these gates are still a nuisance to rider or driver, but nearly all have been reformed within my own time. In our parish the gates used to have names, and these have vanished, or are fast vanishing, from the recollection of our inhabitants. Perhaps the best known is Trigmire Lane gate, which stood on the road now leading to the station just where it crosses the railway: there was then a wooded hollow here, just on the edge of Churchill parish. The 'town gate', so far as I can make out, was on the same road nearer the village, perhaps where Jim Pearce's cottage now stands. Knowlham's gate stood on the road to Daylesford, just where it enters Daylesford parish: and Kite's House gate marked the entrance of the bridle-track into the same parish.¹ Down Thorns gate was up on the hill near White Quar, and Conygree gate still stands to guard Brick's field, just below this house, from straying animals.

But I must now turn to a more important matter, the distribution of land on the new system. I will begin with the freeholders, large and small. I choose a few out of about twenty-five in all, to illustrate the difficulties of the Commissioner and the varying size of the holdings.

One of the first we meet with is the allotment to

¹ A small triangular bit of grass at this point is still known as Kite's Corner. Was Kite a human being?

Charles Bridges, in lieu of half a yardland, of five acres and a fraction. Bridges had, no doubt, reported his strips in the open field as half a yardland, according to the tradition in his family: to measure them all would have been an expensive job, as any one will know who has looked over old terriers and surveys of unenclosed land. If the Commissioner were careful, he would look both to the extent and quality of the land comprised in this half yardland, and to the rent it paid, if it paid any. Apparently in this case the strips were of no great value, for if we reckon half a yardland at fifteen acres, which would be the full traditional amount, or even twelve or ten acres, as might well be the case, Bridges only got in return a compact allotment of five. But when we look at the award map to discover where these five acres were, it becomes obvious at once that the Commissioner was fair; they were just at the top of the village, convenient in every way as compared with the distant strips, and also they were such good land that at the present moment they are used as valuable nursery garden by Taylor & Sons. A similar case is that of J. Ledsam (a name now unknown here), who for half a yardland received seven acres odd: but this again is extremely valuable land just behind the present village post-office. I suppose that these small holders got their equivalents for their strips by mutual agreement and representation to Mr. Davis, who would, of course, endeavour to satisfy every one so far as lay in his power.

Passing to larger holdings, we find that Mrs. Hayward, for four yardlands, receives about 90 acres of pretty good land towards Daylesford, adjoining the present railway; if we reckon acre for acre, this would make the yardland about 23 acres, which was very likely much about the normal size. Then we come to allotments to Mr. Langston of Sarsden, which at first sight might astonish us. For example, in return for a yardland and a half he gets 49 acres: for another yardland 31 acres: for another 30. But all this land (now the property of Mr. Young, and lying below his Homes to the eastward) is, or was, thin and scrubby land with a good deal of furze on it. Just in the same way the Rev. J. W. Lockwood for nine yardlands received 265 acres, all in that outlying clayey part of the parish which Mr. Young has turned to such good account, and which was formerly called 'Upper Common' (see above, p. 37): it had and still has a great deal of gorse on it. We might naturally expect that he would get a larger acreage than would be the equivalent of his land in strips. For his rectorial glebe Mr. Lockwood received an equivalent of excellent land, 82 acres for four yardlands, which seems almost too good an exchange; but without more exact details it would not be right to condemn the Commissioner for favour to the Church. John Phillips, dissenter, grandfather of the present owner, received about 73 acres for three and a half yardlands, which is in almost exactly the same proportion as in the case of the glebe.

Before we leave the freeholds we may notice a number of freehold tenements, i. e. cottages or small farm-houses, most of them described as 'ancient enclosures'. There were sixteen in all, and most of them were occupied by their owners. There is, of course, no question here of compensation: they are only put into the award to make the survey complete. One might expect to hear something of equivalents for right of common of pasture, assuming that they had such right: but of this nothing is said, and I will postpone further discussion of it till we come to the question of the treatment of the poor. How these ancient enclosures arose can only be matter of conjecture. On the map they seem to be squeezed into bits of the village not wanted for farm-houses, barns, &c. It is curious that they are almost exactly the same in number as the *liberi tenentes* of the Hundred Rolls (see above, p. 34), but this is probably a mere accident. I may just mention the fact that one of these freehold tenements is the cottage in which my old housekeeper is now housed in my garden, together with my own garden, and belonged to John Shurley, from whose executors I bought it in 1879. The land in front, now the property of Mr. Brick, was then copyhold, and belonged to Shurley's brother Thomas, who received it as compensation for half a yardland in the common fields.

Besides the freeholds there were leasehold allotments of about 200 acres to New College, who held the manor, in exchange for seven and a half yardlands, which would

be at the rate of some 26 acres per yardland, a good allowance, seeing that the land obtained is that of the present manor-farm towards Daylesford, together with the Yantell as a hay-meadow. Of copyhold allotment there were about 400 acres, in exchange for fifteen and a quarter yardlands, which is at the rate of about 24 acres per yardland, or rather more than acre for acre. There were a few small copyholders, and eight copyhold tenements, i.e. cottages within the manor, serving, I presume, as dwellings for labourers working for the larger copyholders.

This may bring us to the difficult question of the poor of the parish, their housing, and their rights.

The population of the parish in 1850 was about 600, according to the census figures given in the *Victoria History of Oxfordshire*. How many of these were labourers living in cottages without land in the common-fields? I have been carefully over the map and the schedule in the award, and can make out about sixty cottages; we have more now, but not many more, and at this present moment we are in serious difficulties about house accommodation,¹ and the rector is putting up one family in his stable buildings. Of these sixty cottages sixteen were freehold tenements, occupied by their

¹ This is owing to two causes: (1) the absorption of cottages by the richer families, who use them (as I use mine) as appendages to their own house resources; (2) the unwillingness of old widows to live together: they live alone obstinately and independently, and we cannot but sympathize. I may add also the reluctance of the landowners to build, as cottages do not pay.

owners ; eight were copyhold tenements : and what of the rest ? I gather from the schedule that they were included in the holdings of yardlands ; they were on the farmers' land, and the labourers living in them worked for these farmers. This is perhaps the reason why some of them seem to be squeezed in close to the old houses of the yardland holders, especially in the other street. I have explained already that all our farm-houses but one are still in the village. In the case of that one, new cottages have had to be built to supply the labour on the farm ; and in the same way, I take it, at some former time, the yardland-holders ran up cottages on their own land in the village for the accommodation of their own labourers, who at one time perhaps were housed in the premises of the farmer employing them.

Supposing there were some sixty cottagers, they must have had large families in order to make up a population of 600, with the addition of the farmers, the tradesmen, and the rector. And the evidence of the registers supports this guess ; for the baptisms between 1843 and 1853 were 178, and in the next decade 221, while at the present time they are far fewer, only reaching about seventy in the decade 1893 to 1903. I myself can remember large families—one of eighteen, all by the same mother. I should guess that the average number of persons living in a cottage in 1850 would be about eight. What had these families to live upon ?

Wages were then very low, not more than ten or twelve

shillings a week at the outside.¹ It is assumed by the Hammonds in their *Village Labourer*, that all cottagers had rights of common of pasture: but of such rights in Kingham I can find no tradition whatever. They had, indeed, the right of getting fuel on all bits of 'waste', for the loss of which they were compensated in the award by the 'Fuel allotments' at the top of the village, and by the use of the Green, a remnant of the old March common. There must have been much inconvenience in this old method of getting fuel, for the wilder parts of this extensive parish, where furze and brake were to be found, were far away towards Cornwell, and there would be much temptation to rifle such hedges as there then were nearer home. It is an interesting fact that the present coal charities, which are of considerable value to our poor in winter, were left soon after the enclosure by one John Laskey, who became aware that the loss of the right of fuelling would create a new difficulty for the poor. The difficulty was solved in reality by the coming of the railway at this very time, and since then there has never been any real trouble about fuel, for coal has in the main been cheap. In the recent coal strike of this spring (1912) we were reminded of the old times by the reversion to wood fuel; but no one complained, and as a matter of fact, we might

¹ See *Victoria History of Oxfordshire*, pp. 207-9. I am told by my friend, Mrs. Grisewood, that an old woman named Ann Bridge remembered tea at 9s. 6d. per lb., sugar at eightpence; meat was cheap, but bread very dear; they had, however, plenty of milk, which was 'allowed' by the farmers.

have gone on much longer without our usual coal supply than we were actually obliged to.

As I said just now, of common of pasture as a right of the labourer I can find no trace, either in the memory of inhabitants, or in such documents as are available. I have just been asking the father of my gardener, Belcher, whether he ever heard *his* father speak of labourers' right of common : and he instantly referred to the right to get fuel from the 'fuzz', but could remember nothing more. Among the rectorial documents, of which I was in custody last winter when the living was vacant, is a thin manuscript book called Woodward's book, which contains a copy, made in 1840 (probably with the enclosure in view), of a valuation made in 1787 of the Kingham 'home and upper commons'. Here one might expect to find something to the point ; but on the contrary, the valuation seems to be entirely concerned with the allotments or divisions in the haymeadows, which were distributed among the yardlandholders, thirty-four in number. Cattle and pasture are not mentioned : the land seems to be all held in severalty, e.g. in the upper common (which, according to the survey, was at the very end of the parish in the low fields near Cornwell), most of the farmers have 'a close at the furze', or a close in Hawting's furze, and all have 'lattermath' at 4s. 2d. per acre, which speaks plainly of hay, as also does the frequent use of the word 'ley', which is never applied to arable land. The home common seems to mean the pasture closes near the

village, together with the meadows used mainly for hay lying along the brook and the Evenlode. Thus, e.g. Mr. John Pegler's entry runs as follows :—

	<i>a.</i>	<i>r.</i>	<i>p.</i>
In the closes, at 20s. per acre	2	0	17
In Lawrence corner, at 20s.	1	0	0
In Hooks ¹ and Duck Bed at 6s.	2	0	0
In Chief Meadow (Yantell ?) at 6s.	1	1	32
In Coxmoor Leys ² at 4s.] fields towards	0	2	0
In Coxmoor flatt, at 11s.] Bledington	0	2	0

In the terrier of 1639, which is of the manor only, there is mention of common of pasture and feeding for

¹ Hooks: cp. 'parcel of meade in North More called a hooke', in the answer of a Bensington man to a commissioner in 1587 (Pearman's *Bensington*, p. 115).

² Leys: see remarks on leying, in Marshall's *Gloucestershire*, i. 157. Here we have a full explanation of the meaning and advantage of 'leying'. It seems that the damage done to the soil of the arable by continuous cropping and fallowing was so great that (as Marshall says of one district, p. 156) they had borne grain till they would hardly pay for the labour of cultivation. Attempts were made here and there to remedy this to some small extent by enclosing and sowing with grass seeds a small portion of the arable, at a time when it was in fallow: this must have been done by common consent of the yardland holders and of the lord of the manor, if the land were his. According to Marshall, it was a difficult process to manage successfully, but if successful, was a great improvement. 'Converting worn out arable lands to a state of profitable sward is one of the most important operations in husbandry, and is perhaps, of all the operations in it, the least understood' (p. 169).

The 'art of leying' was practised at Kingham before 1639, the date of the New College terrier. Thus we find 'lands, eyes, and hades, in a peece at Babden', i.e. in the fields towards Daylesford, near the Evenlode; again, 'leyes (22) at Raunce Furzes newly enclosed', i.e. up on the hill near the Homes; and once more, 'Leyes (16) abutting into Olde way,' i.e. somewhere on the slope south-east of the Homes. The 22 leyes made up a little more

280 sheep, in the cow pasture called the Hey, lying by the mill-brook, i.e. the southern part of the Yantell: this was, no doubt, for the use of the farmers holding of the lord of the manor, and it is possible that the labourers who worked for them may have shared to some small extent in the right. But on the whole, the evidence tends to show that at Kingham there had been much enclosing of the pasture land and even of the arable, long before the general enclosure of the arable took place. This was a common practice from an early period: as may be seen, for example, in Denton's *England in the Fifteenth Century*, p. 156 foll. So far as I can ascertain, when the award was drawn up, there was no question of compensating the labourers for rights of common which they had long lost: fuelling was the only right left to them.

This was, of course, strictly correct in the eye of the law; you cannot award a man compensation to which he has no legal right. Had there been such right, Mr. John Davis would of course have recognized it, as he must have done at Enstone, where he gave in all twenty-eight acres to the poor of the two parishes; but at Kingham it did not exist. The *Village Labourer* seems to assume far too glibly that before enclosures every labourer had

than 4 acres, and the 16 made 3 acres 3 roods, being in each case something more than five leys to the acre. One can thus form an idea of a ley: it would be a ridge or land of no great size laid down as permanent pasture or hay by means of grass seed, and was private property. This will help to explain what was said above about the enclosing of arable as well as pasture long before the general enclosure. See Gonner, p. 38.

a cow and a common to feed it on. (See, e.g., p. 106.) Possibly this is the result of the fact that Arthur Young's last words on enclosing (*Annals of Agriculture*, vol. xxxvi, p. 515), in which he lamented the damage done to the poor thereby, were based on the evidence of parishes where a very large amount of common made it possible *to enclose for the good of the poor*. The enclosure of waste or common in a manor was a process of which the advantage in an agricultural point of view was great, and probably was carried out even in unenclosed parishes to a much greater extent than the Hammonds imagine. The mischief is not, at any period, I think, to be ascribed so much to enclosures, against which an outcry is vain, as to the neglect of the opportunity arising on every enclosing movement to take the true interest of the agricultural labourer into consideration, and to redeem him from the semi-serfdom to which he was in danger of reverting. But the Hammonds' indictment of the richer classes is justified in so far as they usually neglected the interest of the worker on the soil, while intently occupied with their own advantage and that of the country as a whole. They forgot that the rural labourer is a most important part of the population of the country: yet in those days far more depended on his well-being, physical and intellectual, than is the case now.

I do not like to say uncompromisingly that he was neglected here. I never heard any complaints, though my first acquaintance with the village was less than

twenty years after the enclosure, and I have from the first been in the habit of talking to the cottagers. Old Edden, who gave me useful information for the chapter about early Kingham, never suggested to me that he or other labourers had lost anything by the enclosure, though he himself had taken part in it. The old rector and his wife were kindly people, fully alive to their duties towards the poor. They set up a school at their own expense, as I have mentioned elsewhere, for admission to which the charge was quite small. They let out excellent land for allotments, in addition to that provided by the award. They were assiduous in visiting, and knew all about all the people. So it was at Daylesford, and so, too, at Churchill, where new and excellent cottages were built, and schools provided.

It may be that there was too much of the feeling that the poor are always with us, and ought so to be; too little reverence for the labourer as a human being. There was a general idea in those days that he must be kept in his place, but ministered to. He still owns the superior status of the gentry, and I am often embarrassed by salutations in the street of which I can hardly allow myself to be worthy—except from the boys. But we have never kept the worker down, and have always rejoiced to see him prosper. And it is an undoubted fact that from 1850 to 1880 Kingham was in a very prosperous condition.¹ The cost of enclosure had ruined

¹ The population was larger than since 1801, though the Homes had not then been built.

no one, nor the cost of fencing. The only family known to me as having gone to decay in that period was that of the Shurleys, who owned my present premises: they were driven at last to sell, or I might not be here now; but if I am not mistaken, the cause was in reality drink and bad morals. They held seven acres of the best land in the parish, out of which the Brick family each year make good profit now—just such a holding as should have kept them in good state, or enabled them to do (like the Bricks) some other profitable work, such as hauling. But I am strongly inclined to think that the ruin of the Shurleys was inevitable, and had nothing to do with the effects on them of the new system, unless it were that they had not the necessary intelligence to work well under the new conditions.

When I first came here wages were low, but not very low: a good worker as shepherd, gardener, &c., could get fifteen shillings a week or more. After the days of Joseph Arch and the Agricultural Labourers' Union all kinds of rural labour became better paid. I may here mention that I once sat next to Arch in the train between the Junction and Oxford, and talked with him the whole way, much to my profit; his personality impressed me, and he indulged in no rant, though his language was now and then a little strong. That, I think, was after the famous arrest of the fifteen women at Ascott, of which the story may be read in Mrs. Sturge-Henderson's (now Mrs. Gretton) book about North Oxfordshire. I remember Canon Carter of Sarsden, who was one of the

committing magistrates, telling me that they could not pick and choose among the women; but my father, with his long experience of what a magistrate may wisely do, simply said that it would have been far less foolish not to commit any of them to prison. So thought the Home Secretary and the Lord Chancellor.

I may note in conclusion that the prosperity of Kingham at the present day is unquestionable. One good proof of this is the solid way in which the children are dressed and shod: another is the flourishing condition of our two village shops, at one of which the family also works a farm of some 240 acres; it is clear that they are not burdened with bad debts. Money is no longer thrown away upon drink; except one or two familiar old figures, no one is ever seen intoxicated. Cigarettes perhaps eat up more of a lad's wages than they should; but I trust that this misfortune will pass away. Yet another proof of prosperity is the fact, accidentally known to me, that the children have money to spend, given them by their parents, at Kingham 'Club', from sixpence to half a crown per child. This I learnt from letters written to me by the upper standards as an exercise, in which they were to tell me what they did at the club. Last Christmas Day I gave a bright little boy of nine a shilling to spend: to my astonishment he took out a purse to put it in, which was already pretty well lined.

I am therefore forced to the conclusion that in Kingham the enclosure did no harm, and may have

incidentally done a considerable amount of good. I believe that the old system of farming was wasteful and unintelligent, and that our workers were shrewd enough to discover this. Of late, too, they have been shrewd enough to see that it is risky to try and work a small holding unless you have some other occupation to help it out;¹ no labourer applied for land under the 'Small Holdings' Act. If our soil were richer, there might be a better chance; as it is, they can sell their labour without risk, and prosper. That they may prosper still more must be the hope of all who have lived here as long as I have.

I will venture to conclude with the remark that, had the opportunity been taken of the enclosure to inquire into the housing, wages, and general condition of the labourer, his prosperity would have been more rapid and more marked than it has been.

¹ See Richard Jefferies's *Hodge and his Masters*, chapter on 'four-acre farmers'.

CHAPTER IV

OLD VILLAGE FOLKS

IT was on the 14th of July, 1869, so far as I can remember, that I made the acquaintance which first brought me to Kingham. That day I made my first glacier expedition in the Alps; and I arrived that evening with my brother and a friend, after fifteen hours on rock and ice, at the Eggischorn hotel, where our party attracted the attention of an elderly gentleman who was waiting on the terrace for his dinner. At table I sat next to him, and recounted, with all modesty I hope, the adventures of the day, while he discoursed of Mont Blanc and Monte Rosa and the Col du Géant, his three great achievements. Next day I found my face so terribly blistered by the glare of sun and snow, that it was painful either to eat or speak, and our new friend came to the rescue with glycerine, which in our ignorance we had not provided. So we formed a friendship; Mr. Barrow accompanied us to the Belalp and Zermatt, and promised to send me an invitation, as soon as the October term began, to spend a Sunday with him in an Oxfordshire village. The friendship lasted till his death at the age of ninety-one, thirty years later, and the Oxfordshire village has been for nearly forty years my home.

For this invitation was not merely a promise: Mr. Barrow (or Captain, as he liked to be called, by virtue of his rank in a London volunteer regiment) was a man of his word. On October 26 I saw Kingham for the first time. If I want to verify the date, I have only to go into the Bodleian Library and ask for Barrow's *Log-book*—of which more directly. I soon found that my host was a much more eccentric old bachelor than I had been able to divine in Switzerland. He lived in a picturesque old house which had once been, and has been again of late, the residence of the rector. It was a cottage to all intents and purposes, but the old gentleman's hobby was to make it as much like a ship as possible. In front of it was a flagstaff about sixty feet high, on which a flag was hoisted at eight o'clock precisely by Greenwich time—the red ensign for example, on the Sunday morning after my arrival. While it was being hoisted by the gardener, Captain Barrow struck 'eight bells' on a bell fixed on the roof of his house, at the sound of which all guests were expected to appear, and breakfast followed. There was, however, just time enough between the eight bells and the breakfast for him to 'log' (as he called it) the weather, wind, barometer, and thermometer.

When *The Times* appeared he set to work to make such extracts from it as might seem most interesting, and in this way the greater part of the morning was spent, or in going to see some old person in the village, or in drilling a squad of rustics out of work. There are

some clever drawings of this pursuit in the older volumes of the log. But later on he took to drilling the school-boys, and for many years the school used to get an additional grant for this performance, which the boys went through in uniform on state occasions, such as the arrival of an Inspector. Now and again he used to give them a march out to some neighbouring village where they were entertained; and on one occasion I remember his chartering a German band, which opportunely appeared in the village that morning, to accompany the march with music. The stolid Teutons were not in the least astonished, but blew away, all out of tune, with perfect *sangfroid*.

After lunch, but not till about three o'clock, we sallied forth for a long walk. Another of Barrow's hobbies was never to get back from his walk till it was nearly dinner-time, so that in winter he was walking for the greater part of the time in the dark. Fortunately there were no motors in those days, no cycles, and very few carriages about, or he might have left his old bones by the road-side long before he actually departed. We struggled along dim and miry field-paths, or on muddy roads, to some fixed destination, Stow-on-the-Wold, or the Merrymouth, or the Cross Hands, where some refreshment could be had, or to Sarsden Pillars or Adlestrop Hill, where we could only expect 'cold harbour'. If it was to the Pillars we went, he invariably inserted a visiting card in some cranny of the stonework, removing the one which he had left at his last visit; I think this

was suggested by the fact that he had in his dining-room, framed and glazed, a card left by Professor Tyndall in a bottle on the top of Monte Rosa, which he, Barrow, had extracted while inserting his own.

I was often very glad to get back after one of these nocturnal expeditions: but if it were frosty or snowy, and we could imagine ourselves in the Alps, one might enjoy them after a fashion. Once I remember he astonished the rustics by carrying out rope and ice-axe (which he always kept displayed in his dining-room), and roping us together while we ascended a steep slope, then slippery with frozen snow. The more astonished they were, the more pleased he was, and he would stop and instruct them in the art of cutting steps, ending invariably, as he ended all such conversations, by a substantial tip. The good captain had some weak points, and one of them was this—that he liked to make a little harmless display, and send his audience away happy with a ‘gratuity’ as he liked to call it. These gratuities were a serious trouble to the village, for they brought the tramps down upon it from all parts, for whom the flag that waved over his garden was a sure sign that something to their advantage was to be had there.

Dinner lasted a long time and was followed by port wine. When at last we got back to the drawing-room there was only an hour left till bed-time, which was ten punctually. This hour was spent by me usually in writing in the log-book something that would please the

old gentleman. If it was winter, I would write an account of an Alpine expedition after the manner of the *Alpine Journal*. Sometimes it was poetry, either humorous in English, or more serious in Greek or Latin. As the captain knew neither of these languages, he had a great veneration for the learning I displayed, and the name he gave me, the Don, is to be found all through the handsomely bound volumes which are now enshrined in the Bodleian. For I must explain that as the log-book increased in bulk, owing to the longer time he spent as he grew older in making extracts from *The Times*, he became convinced that it ought to be preserved, and bequeathed it to the Bodleian, whose rulers accepted it without the smallest hesitation. Not long ago I showed the present Bodley's Librarian over the village, which he had come from Oxford on purpose to see as the home of my old friend.

I could tell much more about the captain, or colonel as he finally became, and his whims and oddities, his real good nature and kindly spirit. His mother was a Boer from the Cape. His father, Sir John Barrow, who went with Lord Macartney's mission to China in 1796, was for some time at the Cape on his way home : it was then in our hands, but was soon given back for a time to the Dutch. Sir John's autobiography is peculiarly interesting at this point of his long career. His son had something of the dogged obstinacy of a Boer. He showed this in his absolute refusal, up to the end of his life, to see a doctor, to wear gloves (though he

possessed a pair which he used to carry), or to sit in a comfortable chair. He was tough, though not really strong, and he lived to be more than ninety by virtue of taking both stout and port twice at least daily. When he was pitched off his horse, and sprained his ankle badly, he preferred to endure all sorts of misery rather than send for a doctor. I doubt if I ever saw him in a great-coat: but he wore, winter and summer, very thick warm clothes. He was a worthy son of his father, who never but once consulted a doctor (and that was a Chinese one), had done all the work of Secretary to the Admiralty for some forty years, and had written a hundred and seventy articles in the *Quarterly Review*, besides his own interesting autobiography, and other books. His son was very proud of him, and every year paid a visit to the Barrow monument at Ulverston, where the family had been small yeomen for generations.

The last year of my undergraduate life was greatly enlivened by visits to 'the Castle', as Barrow called his house, and I soon made friends with the rector and his wife, and many others in the village, almost all of whom have now passed away. There is undoubtedly something fascinating about Kingham, as every one who has been here will allow. Its fresh air and breezy situation have something no doubt to do with this; but there is also a certain independence and irregularity about it, making it less commonplace than a village of prim cottages well looked after by a large and benevolent land-owner. Such a village is Churchill, on the hill between us and Chipping

Norton ; and the reader will now appreciate the saying of old John Beacham, who insisted that he would rather be hung in Kingham than die a natural death in Churchill. There are no Beachams left in Kingham now, but I think the sentiment survives. We never have been close allies of the Churchill folks, but have always had more good will to spare for those of Bledington, the Gloucestershire village a mile to the west, squireless and irregular like our own.

True, the rector had almost turned himself into a squire by buying land and farming his own glebe, and he and his wife in some sense dominated the place, though they did not overshadow it. Good kindly people they were, and till the days of Joseph Arch and the enlightenment of the labourer, no one really questioned their authority. They ministered to the wants of their parishioners, and when I became the tenant of a small house opposite their gate, they ministered to my wants too. Not only by invitations to dinner, which came two or three times a week ; but the rectoress would send over little gifts and helps, just as she would do the villagers—a jug of beer, or a loaf of good bread, and, in fact, anything that I had happened to notice as being good at her own table. One of my earliest pupils, a great favourite of hers (and she had an unfailing judgement in young men), once had both loaf and butter sent over to him, to take away to his own home: I remember that we cut a cavern in the loaf and deposited the butter there for safe conveyance in his portmanteau. We used to

call her 'the queen', and never ventured to neglect a command to dine over the way, though sometimes we would fain have had music at home instead. She was celebrated for her liqueurs of home-grown fruit, and after dinner decanters of these drinks would be ranged in front of her: the one to which I was supposed to be peculiarly addicted was damson gin; and he who knows Thackeray's *Hoggarty Diamond*—a story I have known and loved since those old days—will understand why I called it Rosolio. This kind and dear old lady was really a constitutional queen of Kingham, and there are many stories told of her queenship in her own family.

Like other queens, she had a prime minister, or grand vizier: I need hardly say that this was the schoolmaster. Among the many benefits conferred on the village by the rector, none has been so lasting and valuable as the school. When the old tithe barn was no longer needed for the rectorial spoils, it was a happy thought to put that fine old building to a new use, and a school it continued to be, in spite of all inspectors, for some sixty years. But I am writing of human beings, and I must leave the school to say a word of the master.

Not long before I first knew the village, a schoolmaster had been procured from a training college, young, smart, alert, and certificated. He was an optimist; he thoroughly believed in himself and his work, and he did it in truth very well as things were done then. Perhaps in some ways he did it better than it is now done in many schools; he made the children learn the three R's and

kept them in good order, and if that were all that is wanted in primary schools we should have done very well. How changed in these days is the whole ideal of school work! Now, as with children of higher station, we try to educate the *intelligence*, in the hope that this will of itself make it difficult to forget the elementary subjects. But in the old days the whole strength of the teaching was devoted to the drill and discipline by which these subjects were hammered into the youthful minds, for the inspector demanded a high standard of mechanical 'knowledge', and if he made himself unpleasant, the whole teaching staff would give way to despair, and even the prime minister himself was for a time broken-hearted. But this was seldom, and, as a rule, he was a mighty person in the village, and no one who wanted official help, or access to Her Majesty, ever thought of applying to any one else.

So much for the government of Kingham in those remote days when we had no parish council and no revolutionary spirits. But there was another official of no small importance to us all—'one of the most remarkable men in our country', as the Americans used to say in the days of Martin Chuzzlewit; this was Tom Phipps the postman, whose cheery *concerto* on the horn (so we musical ones used to call it) was heard at seven o'clock outside my window every evening except Sunday.

Tom Phipps was more like Mark Tapley than any man I ever knew. I can see him now—fresh, hearty, jaunty, swinging along with an easy but rather short step, and

bidding you good-day in a high cheery musical voice. He walked some three-and-twenty miles every week-day, besides working in a garden in the early afternoon, and was just as brisk at the end of his day as at the beginning. The walking did not weary him because his eyes and mind were ever on the alert. It was a treat to hear him, in his old age, tell of birds and animals he had noticed in his walks, and if any one ever writes a book on the Fauna of Oxfordshire, he may be glad to know of Tom's positive assertion that he had once seen a 'marten-cat' in Bruern Wood.¹ He was, of course, perfectly happy in all weathers, and in the great snow-storm of January 18, 1881, he was the only postman in the district who struggled through it and entirely carried out his duty. I had gone to Oxford that morning to do some work, and my train back just contrived to fight through the snow; but when we reached the station I found I could not face the blizzard, and took refuge in the inn for some four hours, when, with the help of two friendly porters, I at last got home. In the hollow by the brook I felt for the first and only time in my life the desire to sit down in the snow and go to sleep. Just in front of me, I heard afterwards, was Tom Phipps: he turned into a cottage—the only one on the road—to warm his hands, and they were instantly frost-bitten. I doubt if he ever quite recovered from that blizzard, for in his old age he

¹ He meant the Pine Marten (*Mustela martes*), and he is not likely to have been mistaken. This animal is still found in Wales (see Forrest's *Fauna of North Wales*, p. 28 foll.).

was the victim of acute attacks of rheumatism, to which he at last succumbed.

I alluded just now to his voice. It was a very musical speaking voice, and his speech was perfectly free from the rather ugly local accent. It was a musical singing voice too, and Tom knew this very well and loved to listen to it in church. He used to sit in a front seat and lift up his voice so melodiously that I have known Philistines object to it as unseemly. His recital of the creeds, especially the Nicene creed, was to me always a singularly delightful hearing, and I can hear him now in the last words of it, which he uttered in a peculiar cadence, a little *ritardando*—‘And the life of the world to come, A-a-men.’ I have this moment looked it out, to remind myself of that cadence, in an old prayer-book of his, adorned with many wonderful illustrations on wood, given me by his daughter after his death.

Now we have three postmen, none of whom walk; I fear that Tom would have thought them rather luxurious dogs. Yet I understand they are all radicals, while Tom Phipps, who had worked far harder all his life, was a stout conservative, and in his last years *laudator temporis acti*. In regard to education he might carry this a little too far, and exaggerate the uselessness of the modern improvements in primary education. But he was right in thinking that the boys of our day are less spry and handy than they should be; and I remember with what gusto he once told me that when he was a lad beginning his postman’s work, he used to get up,

with other lads, at daybreak on a summer's morning to make themselves into cricketers, because they worked all day and had to go to bed early. But Tom was an exceptionally vigorous man, and came, I should say, of a vigorous family of middle-sized men with black curly hair, a rare thing, this last, in our parts. He had a large family himself, and he was one of a large family too, for he used to tell how his father, when the tenth child made his appearance, took him to old Parson Western and offered him as a tithe of his family. This was in the days before the Tithes Commutation Act, and Tom's father did not see why if the parson relieved him of his tenth sheaf and his tenth egg, he should not also relieve him of his tenth baby. But I must leave my dear old friend's tales and memories, or these notes will become wearisome.

After the postman naturally comes the carrier. We had to get things brought up from the station a mile away, and supplies, in part at least, from Chipping Norton. When it was not too heavy I carried my own bag from the station, but, as a rule, it was possible to obtain the help of a donkey and cart, kept by three queer brothers, all lame, and all below the ordinary level of rustic intelligence, all too answering to the name of Pickford, as representing the same style of business as that distinguished firm. The donkey picked up a living where he could, and might frequently be seen grazing by the side of the road with someone's luggage unprotected in the cart behind him. In fact, there was always

some doubt whether your luggage would catch the train, if it were going down to the station, and how soon it would arrive if it were coming up. More than once I have had to go in search of it, and more than once too I have found it near the station at the cross-roads, temporarily deposited for safety in the ditch, while Pickford went off with his cart on some distant errand. It was no good slanging or scolding : these half-witted fellows were impervious to all such criticism. One of the three, however, was far better in every way than the others, and had a redeeming sense of humour. One winter day, in wet weather, I was plodding down the miry road, carrying a clean pair of boots to change into when I got to the station (for we had then no footpath by the road-side, and no good blue-stone for road-mending), and on the way I overtook that Pickford, urging on his donkey with a stolid face. I complained of the mud, and he answered with a grunt so unsympathetic that it roused me. 'It's all very well', I said, with raised voice and indignant tones, 'for people like you, who can afford to ride in their carriage!' This sally so completely upset the old fellow that he nearly fell back into his cart with laughing.

The carrier to Chipping Norton was a far more interesting person than these brothers : he was, in fact, one of the most curious characters I have ever known. He was not of our country, and I doubt if our folk altogether appreciated him ; he was a native of Wisbeach in the east country, and came to us with the railway as

a carpenter. After marrying a wife here—little Lucy Bridge, who is still among us—he went off again to work on other lines in course of construction, and I have a relic of his, given me by his widow, in the shape of a huge silk handkerchief on which are displayed in black all the lines then being made or projected in England. Ours, the one from Oxford to Worcester, was not even projected when this map-kerchief was made; Oxford had a line from Didcot, and the one on to Birmingham is marked as to come. In course of time Porter and his wife gravitated back to Kingham, like most people who have ever been here, and he settled down as carpenter, carrier, and handy man in all kinds of work. There was nothing to be done in a village which Porter could not do, and he ought to have made a fortune. After the great blizzard he spent a day in the attic under my roof getting rid of the snow which had come in through the newly-laid tiles. He descended into my well when the water of my bath exhibited a curious furry fluffiness, and brought up a collection of carcasses of mice and rats that had tumbled into it. Once he went down a poisonous well after a poor mad girl who had fallen or thrown herself into it, and gained a medal from the Royal Humane Society. He took all the swarms of bees, and handled them with affection and impunity. He took wasps' nests also, and once took home with him one from my garden; but in the evening I happened to look into his cottage to see it, and found him and his wife standing up on chairs, with the wasps, which had

come to life again, buzzing all about the place. He made all the coffins, and walked at the head of the funeral processions.

But in spite of all his attainments Porter never made money, simply because he seldom took the trouble to ask for it. He was so casual, so untidy (a peculiarity which he shared with his wife), and so procrastinating, that he never kept accounts, and never knew what was owing to him, or what he owed to others. He would come and ask me to pay him for work, when he wanted money for his rent, but he never knew how much I owed him, and would make a shot at it in a curiously irritable way—as though he could not be troubled about such trifles. The habit of putting off things had grown upon him, and at last he sank almost into poverty, ejected from one cottage to another because he would not pay his rent. I remember seeing him come down the street one day of a parliamentary election just before the poll closed, and asking him which way he was going to vote; he said he had not made up his mind, and I was told afterwards that he spoilt at least one voting-paper.

All animals loved Porter, and he loved them in his own curious way. But this again led to difficulties, for he never could make up his mind to kill them. His fowls waxed old and tough, and lived in the cottage with their owners. His pony lived to be forty and survived him, as I have told in a little story called *Selina's Starling*. He had a sunstroke or a fit of some kind one hot day while working on his allotment, and left his plucky

little wife in poverty. She is still with us, over eighty years old, and until lately her cottage swarmed with cats which ate up all her little substance: now, to the great relief of her neighbours, there is but one. But poor dear Mrs. Porter is haunted by one which, as she declares, is kept and tortured by her next door neighbour, and in spite of all we can do or say, she is heard moving about at night looking for it.

Kingham has always abounded in Cooks;¹ they have never spoilt our broth, and some of them still do us credit, though they can hardly be said to have the salt and savour of the old 'uneducated' generation. My first housekeeper was a Cook: a good but melancholy widow, who loved to talk of her deceased husband and other village folk. I always think of her as she went to church on Sunday evenings in a melancholy pair of cotton gloves, into the fingers of which her own had never penetrated far, so that the ends of them hung limp and loose. Then there was Gardener Cook, who lived in the next house to mine, and used to pass my windows so often, looking in, that my sisters mentioned it to his employer the old rector, and the rector mentioned

¹ I do not, however, find Cook among the names in the registers of the seventeenth century. Very few of our present village names are there, except Keen, Pearse, Bridge or Bridges, Hunt, Gillett, Nash, Andrews, and Phipps. Many names have vanished from among us even within the last eighty or one hundred years, e.g. Beauchamp (or Beacham), Hawkin, Fawdry, Gulliver, Hathaway, Weever, Grimmett, Burris, Bodfish, Kiddle, Clemans, Baggs, Bunn. The impression left on my mind after going through the registers was that the population must have been continually changing.

it to Mr. Cook in his George-the-third manner. 'Well, well, Cook, why are you always passing Mr. Fowler's window? The young ladies complain of it.' 'They'd much better mind their own business,' Mr. Cook replied, in the true Kingham spirit.

And so we come to old Keeper Cook, a much more important person: for is he not immortalized in the chronicles of Oxfordshire ornithology? On page 145 of Mr. Aplin's *Birds of Oxfordshire* it is written, 'The Stone Curlew bred annually in the wide, stony, arable fields on the hill above Sarsden. In 1887, old Keeper Cook, of Kingham, then over eighty, remarked to me in conversation, that we had no "Curloos" now, and stated that when he lived at Sarsden fifty years ago, they came regularly and bred in these fields. He described the birds very accurately, saying they were very noisy at night, and could run very fast, much faster than a pheasant, and laid two eggs, which were very hard to find, on the bare fallow, with perhaps a few blades of squitch-grass gathered round them.' This is a really valuable record, for this interesting bird has long ago entirely disappeared from our part of the county.

Old Cook's conversation was always quaint and amusing. It was he who asked me one day, as I have recorded in *Summer Studies*, whether it was not Wellington who 'won the prize' at the battle of Waterloo, and on being assured of the fact went on, 'Aye, but 'twas old Blucher as done all the fightin'—why Wellington was a dancing away at a ball till old Blucher come up!' I do

not think he realized that old Blutcher (so he pronounced the name) was a foreigner.

Keeper Cook was the only man I have ever seen wearing a night-cap with a tassel, like that of Mr. Barkis in *David Copperfield* as delineated by Phiz, which David was requested to shake because the old man's hands were so rheumatic. Hearing he was ill I went to ask after him, and was invited to go upstairs. I shook his hand, not his tassel, and we had a talk; he asked me how I was, and I said I had been having headaches. Mr. Cook said he had never had the headache himself, but could tell me of a certain cure for it. 'You get a bit of assafetito (assafoetida), and stick'n under your nose; it do smell bad, but you won't never have no more headache.' Soon after this he was gathered to his fathers, and is now quite forgotten except by the oldest among us.

Among the memories of these old village friends, none are dearer to me than those of old Joseph Collett and his comely wife, whose names, inscribed on a single tombstone, I see almost daily in the churchyard. They were a comfortable old couple who had once kept an inn at Shipston-on-Stour, and there was something still about them of the jovial landlord and landlady. Mr. Collett once gave me a hint that he had been, if anything, too jovial in his young days. I had seen him that Sunday at church both morning and afternoon, and as I was on the point of knocking at his door to enjoy a chat in the evening, I met him just starting up street for the chapel! He explained that when he was young he sometimes

went neither to church nor chapel, and now, in his old age, he was making up for it. But he gladly turned back, and we had a cosy chat over the fire—he and Mrs. Collett sitting in armchairs on each side of the hearth, myself in the middle, and my dog and their cat amicably reposing in front of us. I remarked on this amiability; when Collett, with a sly glance at his wife, said, ‘Yes, but you take and tie ’en together, and see what’ll happen!’

Mr. Collett had much to tell of his inn-keeping days: of the dancing at Christmas, and the old stone-deaf woman who asked why the fiddler didn’t take a pair of scissors to’n, instead of scraping away at the strings like that: and of his vote, and the way in which it was solicited by the candidate Sir Peter Pole. I asked him which party he voted for. ‘Once’, he replied, ‘I voted for the Liberals, and once I voted for the *Conservatories*, and once I voted for *nee’run*.’

Occasionally Mrs. Collett would take up the talk, and it was she who told me the story of the pet lamb, which I often tell myself to prove the superior delicacy of masculine feeling. Just before they gave up the inn they had a pet lamb given them, of which they were very fond, and they took it with them to Chipping Norton, where they had taken a small house. The lamb fed for a while on a bit of grass near at hand, but in course of time—there was no help for it—it had to be sent to the butcher. And Mrs. Collett added, glancing across the fire-place at her husband, ‘Collett he wur that fullish he wouldn’t taste a mossel of ’en!’

Last in my list comes one with a beautiful name, which I will refrain from revealing ; a very different man from Cook or Collett : more refined, better educated, a gentleman by nature. He and his wife were fairly well to do, and he had no trade in Kingham ; but he was an excellent gardener, handled every plant and tree as if he loved it, and has left many memorials of himself in my garden among my roses and fruit-trees. His white hair and benevolent look are for ever associated with one exquisite climbing rose on my house, of which the scent is unequalled among all roses. He was ever welcome in my garden, and exercised a mild authority over the flowers and fruit, being always called in, as a kind of consulting physician, whenever the working gardener was deemed unequal to the occasion. Chats in the garden were thus of constant occurrence, and it was during one of these, when we had got upon politics, that he asked me if I would like to know why he had always been a Liberal. I asked him to come into the house and sit down ; and there I listened to one of the most wonderful tales that I have ever heard or read of. It has remained photographed on my memory, and I have often told it at its full length, but I feel that I may not write it down, for there may be memories in it in which living persons are still interested. The incident that made this man into a Liberal was a mere nothing compared with the rest of the story, which was really that of his elopement and marriage with the daughter of a gentleman farmer in the Cotswolds, in whose service

he was at the time as general manservant. He had lately lost his wife when he told me the story, and I suppose that old memories were occupying his mind. I had always heard that his wife had been 'a lady', and that she was a determined woman, though a gentle one, I could very well guess ; but that afternoon I learnt that she was a heroine, and that though what she might think right to do was not always right in the opinion of others, her own steadfast conviction would carry her safely through all opposition.

Twice in the story she showed this heroic resolution. She left her father's house, where she was very unhappy, at midnight with the man she loved, and as they passed out into the great road running to Cheltenham over the wolds, she took off her gold chain with its watch, and gave it to him as a token that she descended to his rank in life. 'She never wore it again,' he added, 'and I have it still.'

And again a few days later, when her love, now at last her lawful husband, had been lodged in Oxford jail for deserting his service and breaking out of the house, his wife refused to touch food until she saw him again. All persuasion was useless, and they had to release him. It may be truly said that they lived happy ever after, at first among the Bledington orchards, and then among the gardens of Kingham.

CHAPTER V

BIRDS, PAST AND PRESENT

As I read once more—not without the pleasure of a parent in contemplating his first-born—my ancient book, *A Year with the Birds*, I find that much of what is there said about the birds of Kingham and Oxford does not strictly hold good of the Kingham or Oxford of the twentieth century. This is not owing to any fault of mine; it is the fault of the birds themselves, or rather, perhaps, of some facts in their life-history which are entirely hidden from us at present. True, the majority of *residents*, with one exception to be mentioned directly, are much as they were when I wrote my book in 1885-6; but two or three of the most familiar and welcome migrants have almost disappeared from our fields and streams. This fact, disappointing as it is, is none the less an interesting one; for the gradual increase or decrease of the numbers of a species in a particular locality depends on circumstances most difficult to determine. Here is one of the many fascinating problems of ornithology, and one to which too little attention has been paid by observers.

Let me mention, to begin with, a remarkable example of what I mean. In the fourth chapter of *A Year with the Birds* I wrote of the Kingham brook, which borders

the Yantell, that 'both water and mud are often thick with the dye from the Chipping Norton tweed mill, and no trout will live below the point where the poisoned water comes in. Strange to say, the poisoning does not seem to affect the birds. Two pairs of Grey Wagtails, which I seldom see in the Evenlode, passed a happy time here from July to December 1 last year (1885) . . . and through August and September they were joined by several Green Sandpipers'. Now for many years past neither Grey Wagtails nor Green Sandpipers have been regular autumn visitors. A Wagtail may appear now and again, but makes no stay; and the Sandpipers have almost entirely deserted us. I have only seen one of recent years, and that was in the pure little stream on the further side of Churchill Heath wood, which, according to Tom Phipps, should rightly be called 'Madbrook'.¹

Although, as I noted, the birds in former days did not seem to be disgusted by the occasional pollution of the water, it is possible that one horrible inundation of poison in 1898 created some permanent prejudice in their minds. This occurred on Good Friday of that year. Some one asked me early in the morning to go and look at the brook. I found it in a condition which caused me instantly to write to the Chipping Norton authorities, and the same thing has never happened again. The black mud-banks were covered with the heads of wretched gudgeon innumerable, protruded out of the water because it was too poisonous for them to breathe.

¹ But see below, p. 152.

I imagine that every fish in the brook was killed that morning; for in the afternoon I found the water, the whole way to the point where it joins the Evenlode, covered with the floating corpses of these miserable victims. Near this point, and just by a weir over which the water falls some eight or ten feet, I had been watching a pair of Grey Wagtails who were obviously thinking of nesting there, and was congratulating myself on the probability of a record almost unique in our county. But the stench of the water was too much for them, and they went elsewhere, probably to some clear wholesome Cotswold stream. It is, however, a curious fact that though the water has for many years been perfectly pure, the Sandpipers have never come back again, and the Grey Wagtails have never attempted to nest, and have very rarely visited the brook.

I pass to a most remarkable example of change in the numbers of a species, for it includes *both an increase and a decrease* within my own memory. When I first began to notice birds here and at Oxford in the seventies, the Yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla raii*) was not by any means abundant, so far as I can recollect; and I do not think I can be wrong, for in those days, when I was learning to recognize the birds with immense ardour in solitary walks, I can hardly have overlooked such conspicuous and charming creatures as these. But in a few years they began to press themselves on my attention all the summer through, and in the spring of 1887 (April 28) I saw a wonderful assembly of them on Port Meadow

at Oxford, which I thus described in the *Oxford Magazine* of May 9, 1888.

‘The river’s brink was studded for a full mile with their bright yellow breasts; among buttercups and marigolds I might hardly have noticed them, but it was cold, windy, and pelting with rain, and the grass was not as yet blossom-covered. As I walked along the bank, looking for sandpipers, they got up from beneath my very feet, for they were sheltering themselves from wind and rain just under the lip of the bank. Then they would settle on the turf, all turning towards me and showing like brilliant spots of yellow: for I was walking with my back to the gale, while all birds must needs face it, to save their plumage from ungentle ruffling. They had but just arrived, and seemed to be as yet unpaired, but in a few days they were nearly all distributed over the country side in pairs, and the great assemblage had vanished.’

For the next few years I regularly looked out for them on the great meadow, and never failed to find plenty, with one or two of their continental blue-headed cousins among them. All these years they were abundant at Kingham, and, indeed, in all suitable places wherever I happened to be. It is perhaps worth recording that in 1895, on Easter Sunday, April 15, while staying at Bordighera, I found another remarkable assembly of several forms of this species, with heads varying in colour from pure yellow to pure black: or perhaps I should call them sub-species that overlap each other all over the old world from Britain to Japan. These

had just crossed the Mediterranean, and were, in fact, dropping in from sea as I stood on the shore.

During these years of their abundance these little birds made every summer walk delightful. They were running about among the feet of the cattle, or perching on telegraph wires, on high branches of trees, or even on the ears of wheat, which hardly bent beneath their weight. Their cheerful little silvery note was so familiar all round us, that I have known a Sedge-warbler mock it with persistence and success, and the Marsh-warbler would occasionally indulge in the same pastime.

But in 1894 I had already noted a diminution in their numbers, and ever since then there has been no question about it. I still look out for them on Port Meadow, and, indeed, on both sides of the river, but even in April they are few and far between. This year, 1912, I have only seen one. I do not see them in the Parks, or in a spot near Marston copse where they were once always to be found. At Kingham I see more during their autumn migration than at any time in spring or summer; then they flock with the Pied Wagtails and roost in the big osier-bed. But in June the joyous little yellow sprites no longer dance about the hay, or pick up the flies stirred by the feeding cattle.

I can give no explanation of this singular change. Man can have had no share in bringing it about: the nests are very hard to find, and our boys, even if they found them, would not take the eggs. Everything in Oxfordshire is as it was twenty years ago, so far as

these birds are concerned, in the condition of our rural economy, and they can have nothing to complain of. We must be content to confess our ignorance of the causes which increase or diminish their numbers; but some day, when our scientific ornithologists are less absorbed in the discovery of new species in far away lands, and of varying forms of species at home and in Europe, they will find time to attack a problem, the very difficulty of which lends it attraction.¹

Before I go on to another clear example of this curious upward and downward curve in the numbers of a species visiting and breeding in this county, let me remark that whatever be the cause of it, the Wild Birds' Protection Act, and its application by a County Council, can have nothing to do with it. In Oxfordshire we have never asked for power to protect these small migrants, believing, rightly as I think, that they do not need it, and that such protection would only be creating small crime with no profit to man or bird. The great increase

¹ Another case needing investigation is that of the Landrail or Corncrake, which used to be extremely common, while now its 'crake' is seldom heard. My dog put one up in a field where the barley was still standing, October 4, 1912, and having the bird in my mind, I asked a boy on my way home (the same boy who found the Stonechats' nests) whether he knew the 'crake', imitating it for him. He did not recognize it in the least. The numbers of this species are liable to much change, probably owing to the fluctuation of the date of hay-harvest; an early harvest will destroy the nests. In some counties the numbers have been recently well maintained; see the *Birds of Cheshire* (Coward and Oldham), and the *Birds of Surrey* (Bucknill). For the variation in Hampshire, see Kelsall and Munn's *Birds of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight*, p. 272.

in the numbers of the Yellow Wagtail between about 1885 and 1895 came about after the first Act had been passed, but without help from it in this county. These Acts are of some use in checking attacks on rare and obvious birds, such as Hawks and Owls, and possibly of some very limited value in preserving Bullfinches and Goldfinches. But the vast majority of our small birds, especially the summer migrants, attract little notice and call for no protection, and I would earnestly advise those warm-hearted but ill-informed persons, who from time to time write to the Society for the Protection of Birds, drawing terrible but imaginary pictures of depredations committed, to study the facts patiently and coolly. The explanation of those facts does not lie in Oxfordshire and England, or in anything man does there, but in the Great Sahara and the African regions to the south of it, and in the weather in the Mediterranean at the time of migration. But even about this last possibility there is a difficulty: bad weather in migration time should affect many species, not one or two only: for many are travelling just about the same time.

Sometimes, let us remember, a species will increase or decrease as the result of its own vitality or want of vitality, and of its power or want of power to adapt itself to new conditions of life. I can give examples of both increase and diminution brought about in this way.

A few years ago the Redshank was hardly known in this county or in Berkshire. When Mr. Aplin published

his *Birds of Oxfordshire*, a book of remarkable and accurate knowledge, he wrote of the Redshank as only an occasional visitor, seen now and again in the winter, adding that there is a single specimen in the Oxford Museum, labelled as shot on Port Meadow. But in June 1905 I heard of Redshanks breeding near Bablock Hithe, and made a solitary expedition one morning to make sure of them: and on the 13th of that month Mr. Aplin himself, wishing to see the sight with his own eyes, accompanied me there and satisfied himself. Since then this beautiful bird has become well known to all ardent ornithologists in Oxford, as breeding regularly in several places along the river above Oxford and elsewhere. On April 2, 1910, I was even able to record it as occurring at Kingham, but it was then only resting for the night on its way to its breeding-grounds. There can be no doubt that this is a vigorous species, and it seems also to be an adventurous one, pushing into new districts and settling comfortably in new quarters. In his edition of *Yarrell's Birds* (vol. iii, p. 470) the late Mr. Howard Saunders gives a good instance of its plucky way of adapting itself to altered surroundings. He says that at Ravensthorpe in Lincolnshire the common was once a great haunt of this species, but now consists of enclosed fields of 50 to 100 acres, sown with clover: yet the Redshanks still return to breed in the old place.

Now let us take, by way of contrast, a little bird that is comparatively weak and delicate, the Dartford

Warbler; one which seems only to be able to exist on furzy heaths in thick cover, and whose wings are so short and small that it can do little more than creep about in this cover, flitting rather than flying when it does take wing. I happen to know it well, for I once had the good luck on two successive days to watch it feeding its young on the great heath between Wareham and Poole harbour in Dorset. In the very hard winters of 1880-1, and 1886-7, it must have suffered severely, for as Mr. Mansel-Pleydell has told us in his *Birds of Dorset*, it was rarely seen after those years: but it is now again holding its own in the southern counties in suitable places. There is evidence that some years ago a few pairs existed in the gorse on Shotover and near Stow Wood, but I myself have never seen it in this county, in spite of careful search. In June 1834 a pair of these birds were killed, alas, near Stow Wood, and the criminal who shot them (an undergraduate apparently) saw several others and found a nest. Since then I know of only two or three records for the whole county. Protection for such a bird as this might be of some use: but it would be protection against those who should be its friends, not against the much defamed schoolboy, who would neither notice the bird nor find its nest. If its numbers decrease, if it dies out altogether in counties like ours, which are ill suited to its needs, the cause will be a natural one, arising from its own weakness, and it is most improbable that any amount of legislation will be of use in such a case. The most likely

place for it near Oxford is the great hollow to the south-west of Shotover, now happily the property of the University; and I think we may be confident that any one finding it there will look on it as university property, and respect it accordingly.

But let us return from this digression to take another example of the double curve of which I was speaking just now. In 1885 I wrote of the Redstart as follows in *A Year with the Birds*: 'The Redstart was not a very common bird about us until some three years ago, but now its gentle song is heard in May in almost every garden and well-hedged field. In August and September the young birds are everywhere seen showing their conspicuous fire-tails as they flit in and out of the already fast-browning hedges; yet three or four years ago my daily walks did not discover more than a few dozen in a summer.' In commenting on these facts I came to the same conclusion which I stated just now, that the increase of Redstarts must be put down to causes taking effect beyond the sea.

This remarkable increase was fully maintained for some years. Oxford and its precincts, especially Mesopotamia and all river-banks with pollard willows, became full of them. My garden at Kingham always had a pair nesting in a hole in an old apple-tree, until they were evicted by Starlings, which in their turn gave way to Blue Tits. And however far afield I went, I never failed to find Redstarts. In June 1894 I went with Mr. Aplin into a remote district of Wales, to look

for the Alpine Accentor, which a friend had seen there a few weeks before; and there, breeding among steep rocky slopes some hundreds of feet above the valley, was the inevitable pair of Redstarts. Yet since then the numbers have been steadily decreasing; the familiar gentle song, with its peculiar and unmistakable *timbre*, is seldom heard in Mesopotamia: my garden has long ago been deserted: in my walks about the village and the neighbouring parishes it is now quite an event for me to see a Redstart. The other day I met a friend who lives at Charlbury, half-way between Kingham and Oxford: he stopped and asked me if I had seen a Redstart this year, for he himself had seen not one.

At one time I was inclined to think that this decrease might be due to a want of suitable nesting-holes, caused by an increase in numbers of the Starling, and consequent difficulties in house-hunting; and I still think that this may possibly be a contributing cause, though not the main one. This notion seemed to be borne out by a note in the Migration Committee's Report of 1906, drawing attention to the curiously uneven distribution of the Redstart, which was fairly common in Wales and the north of England (where the Starling is, or was, far less abundant than with us), while it was exceptionally scarce in the south and east. Perhaps the Starling and Sparrow between them, two species which are overabundant and aggressive in the southern corn-lands of our island, may have something to answer for in the case of the Redstart: but without more substantial

evidence I do not like to jump to this conclusion. After consulting a number of county books of ornithology (to which I have always made a point of subscribing as they came out) I am inclined to think that when, from some reason which we cannot get at, the Redstart population is larger than usual, when, that is, the numbers reaching us from abroad are great, the whole of England has to find them quarters: but when, as in recent years, the numbers are below the average, they go on to those breeding-grounds which really suit them best—the woods and hills of Wales and the north.

My friend, Mr. A. Holte Macpherson, who has just returned from Scotland (August 1912) writes to me that the Redstart is there extraordinarily abundant this year; that it is by nature a bird that loves the hills and woods, I think there is no doubt. Professor Giglioli in his *Avifauna Italica* says that in his country it is abundant and well known, but he adds that it *breeds* in the mountains of the peninsula. In Switzerland it is found everywhere except in the pine forests, for the fruit-trees are abundant in every garden and by every road-side, which give it the chance of finding a convenient hole for its nest. The highest habitable regions it leaves to its cousin, the Black Redstart. But I must now go on to say a word about another species, and a hardy one which does not need to migrate in the winter—the Nuthatch.

This is another most interesting instance of diminution in numbers, though not, so far as I can remember, of

increase before diminution. About the diminution there is, I am certain, no doubt whatever, in this county, but I cannot answer for it in other parts. At Kingham we used to have many pairs in the village, and my old friend Colonel Barrow's last years were much enlivened by the constant attendance of Nuthatches at his window, where they used to take nuts out of a tumbler, and carry them off to some undiscovered treasure-house. I have some reason to think that there is still a pair in the village, but I have no personal evidence of it. I never now hear that bright loud self-confident whistle of theirs in spring, or the sweet bubbling note which announced the season of pairing.

These same pleasant and cheerful sounds used to be heard in Christ Church Meadow and other places within the Oxford precincts, but so far as my own experience goes they are now far less familiar. And other witnesses besides myself combine with my own evidence to force me to the conclusion that, in spite of its hardihood, this bird is far more of a rarity than it used to be. My neighbour, Lord Moreton, for example, tells me that they have a single pair at Sarsden, where they once had some twenty. Mr. Aplin is of much the same opinion as regards the Bloxham district. On the other hand, writers in the *Zoologist*, in response to a question of mine, have denied that in their districts, e.g. in Kent, the bird is less common than of old.

In our own county the problem of explaining the diminution ought to be a simple one, for the bird is

not a migrant, and the cause must be near at hand, if we could but hit on it. But there has been no change that would seriously affect the Nuthatches. There is still plenty of suitable timber, plenty of old apple-trees with holes in which they might nest, and I cannot say that I have personal evidence of their eviction from these by Starlings, though it is possible that some years back, when Starlings were increasing by leaps and bounds, this may have happened without my observing it. I do not think that either men or boys, either collectors or mere depredators, can be held responsible. I do, indeed, remember one case in which it was believed that mischievous boys had plastered up a Nuthatch's hole in my village, out of pure 'cussedness': but as the accusers were unaware of the fact that the Nuthatch invariably plasters up its hole for itself, always leaving a very small aperture for ingress and egress, I believe that the much maligned schoolboy was here, as so often, innocent.

What then can the cause be? A total failure of the nut-crop for a year or two might make some difference to the race; but then we must remember that for about half the year the Nuthatch does not feed on nuts, but on the insects, pupae, &c., which are to be found in the bark of trees, and it could probably subsist on these even if it were deprived of nuts in the autumn and winter. I fear that even in this case the cause of diminution is hidden from us. We can make one or two guesses: we can remember the recent epidemic among Woodpigeons, and

guess that something of the same kind has befallen our Oxfordshire Nuthatches. Some years ago there was an almost complete disappearance of squirrels from our woods, which was probably caused by disease ; they have now picked up again, and we may hope the same for the Nuthatches. In 1887 the crayfish of our Thames tributaries were smitten with an epidemic, from which, so far as I know, their numbers have never really recovered. ' Previous to this epidemic they were so abundant in the Thames and its tributaries that a regular industry of making crayfish-pots flourished in many places.' ¹ I never hear of crayfish being caught in our Kingham streams, though long ago it was a great sport on warm summer evenings. But as regards the Nuthatches, unless some one more observant or ingenious than myself will suggest a convincing answer to the puzzle, I must give it up.

Now I turn to a bird which, of recent years, has entirely deserted the city of Oxford, and which I also fail now to find at Kingham, the Reed-warbler. I have, indeed, no reason to suppose that its numbers have seriously diminished. It is still plentiful, I believe, along the banks of the Isis, and in the reed-beds near Wolvercote ; and its absence from our Kingham osier-beds is not by any means conclusive, for I have only known it there as a straggler, and I do not think the Evenlode suits it as do Isis and Cherwell, which are more

¹ Latter, *Natural History of some Common Animals*, p. 48 (Cambridge Biological Series).

sluggish streams with greater abundance of reeds. But as regards Oxford the facts are interesting, and admit of easy explanation.

When I first began to notice Oxford birds, the Cherwell was an almost unknown river. I well remember my first voyage of exploration beyond Parson's Pleasure. Just above the bathing-place we were hailed by a man in a punt, who demanded sixpence for admission to the higher reaches ; this my companion, a barrister from London of powerful build and obstinate character, sternly refused to pay, and we went on. But on our return we found the enemy's punt moored across the stream, and himself armed with a long boat-hook to arrest our progress. Then ensued a terrific naval battle, watched with immense delight by bathers drying themselves on the bank, who naturally took our side and cheered loudly every charge we made. The water was ploughed up in the struggle, and tempers waxed hot, but at last, after several failures, we dodged the boat-hook and slipped away down stream in triumph. The scene is photographed on my memory : but I only mention it here to show how little the Cherwell was navigated, and what peaceful retreats it offered to the birds.

A little way above the bathing-place, in the jungle at the bottom of the Parks, I first made acquaintance with the Reed-warbler's crooning soliloquy. There, year after year, I watched for it in May, and knew that it was breeding though I would not disturb its nest. Then, when I was thoroughly familiar with it, I began

to find it in other places, some of them surprising ones ; not only in suitable spots by our rivers, but some distance away from them. For example, for several years the song was to be heard from lilac bushes in the plantation now mainly occupied by the physiological laboratories. Another favourite place was a bush just outside the Botanic Gardens, and opposite the schools of St. Peter's in the East. In the little copse at the Cherwell end of the Broad Walk a nest was built for several years in succession in a tall privet bush, secure from all invasion ; and on my telling the late Mr. Vere Bayne about this nest, he kindly admitted me into this little plantation early one morning with his key, and we were able to inspect the nest by bending down the branches very gently. It seemed as if the Reed-warblers were beginning to form new habits : the charms of Oxford were so great that they were willing to forgo their favourite reeds if they could but find some shelter in our hallowed precincts.

But then the Cherwell began to come into fashion, and to lose the last syllable of its name—for familiarity breeds contempt even in the use of language, and I doubt whether many undergraduates are now aware that it ever possessed a second syllable. Dons began to keep boats on its bank : ladies' colleges claimed it as their own, and all the summer term it became a scene of enjoyment for pleasure-loving youth and pensive middle age. The Reed-warblers quietly withdrew from these gay haunts, and also from the brick and mortar at the

Museum. I should be glad to know whether they are still to be found farther up the Cherwell, or whether we must go to the upper river for them, and more especially to the somewhat lonely stretches between Bablock Hithe and Eynsham. The last place in which I have heard them close to the city is a dismal spot just beyond those water-logged cottages opposite the towing-path between Hithe Bridge and the North-Western Railway. As I said just now, it does not follow that because they have deserted the city their numbers have diminished in these parts; nor do I in the least blame any one for driving them away: doubtless they can find plenty of comfortable housing in less frequented spots. But looking back over some five and thirty years, it is interesting to note how a change in the fashions and habits of human beings can affect those of the birds. And I hope I may be excused for pointing out, as a phenomenon worth notice, that all this has happened in a period in which what is now called 'nature study' has come into vogue—in which scores of popular books on natural history, and more especially about birds, have been published: societies founded for the protection of birds and plants, and Acts of Parliament for the same purpose passed and loudly proclaimed. I hold my tongue: I never complain of the inevitable: when I see a happy youth or maiden (or both) moored in a punt under the identical bush where once the Reed-warbler loved and sung, I can but murmur that where their ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly in me to be wise.

I will conclude this retrospect with a brief account of the most singular case of increase and subsequent diminution of a species which I have ever met with : but it differs from the examples already mentioned in being limited not only to a single parish, but almost to a single spot. It has the advantage of being easy to explain ; and it will serve to illustrate the conditions under which an uncommon and delicate species may fix itself in a particular breeding-place, flourish there and increase in numbers for some years, yet eventually find itself in adverse circumstances, and die out or at least abandon the position.

In June 1889 I first made acquaintance in Switzerland with the Marsh-warbler (*Acrocephalus palustris*) ; I listened to its delightful song at Meiringen on the banks of the Aar, but failed to find a nest, not knowing then exactly where to look for it. Two years later, in company with Mr. Aplin, I found the nest and eggs, which no one can mistake who has once seen them : this was near Interlaken, between the town and the lake of Brienz : a few days later we found another nest near Stanzstadt, which, like the first one, was hung in the stems of the meadow-sweet. By the time we left Switzerland, we were thus pretty well familiar with the song, appearance, habits, and nesting, of this species, which up to that time had so seldom been found in England that even good ornithologists were apt to doubt its existence as a British species.

Next year, as I have told elsewhere, I heard the

song of the Marsh-warbler in the corner of an osier-bed within ten minutes' walk of my house at Kingham. This bed of osiers had been planted within my own recollection—indeed I can remember skating on frozen flood on the site of it: this bird was therefore in all likelihood not an old visitor which I had previously missed, but a stray individual in search of comfortable quarters for nesting. I summoned Mr. Aplin, and he at once recognized the unmistakable and delightful song. We spent a hot morning there searching for a nest, but neither then nor later in the month did we succeed in finding it. Possibly the male bird failed to find a mate: and indeed, it has always been a mystery to me that when individuals are so scarce it should be possible for a cock to attract a hen to a particular spot: one would fancy that the chances are a hundred to one against him. Of two facts later observation made me certain: that the cock arrives without a mate, and that he sings with extraordinary vigour and persistence for many hours a day on his arrival.

The next year, 1893, the osiers had been cut, and offered no great attraction in the way of cover, and after much listening I gave up all hope of seeing my little visitor again. Great was my delight when on the 20th of June I found that he had taken possession of another osier-bed about half a mile away, which was overgrown and neglected, comparatively dry, and with small open spaces here and there, such as this bird always likes to have about him. It was (and is) a small plot, not

too big for a search, and just under a railway embankment which enabled me to sit and watch from a convenient height above it. Here I soon found a nest, which is now in the Oxford Museum. I was sharply criticized for taking it, but I was confident that the birds would build again, and it turned out that I was right. They returned to this spot next year, but I was away from home most of June, and made no progress in observing them.

In 1895 the birds were here again in June, evidently enjoying the cover which the still neglected osiers gave them; and I again found a nest on the 23rd. In 1896 I found yet another, and watched the progress of the nestlings until July 22, learning in the course of a month more about the species than any one in England then knew, except, perhaps, the late Mr. H. Seebohm. In 1897 there seemed to be two birds singing, but I was away from home and could not trust the work of watching to any one else. In 1898 I found no less than three nests, all with eggs; one of these is that remarkable one with a cuckoo's egg fixed under the lining, which I took and presented to the Museum, as the first Marsh-warbler's nest in which a cuckoo in this country had played her accustomed trick.

Clearly the conditions were suiting the birds, which were otherwise lucky in avoiding the dangers of migration and returning to the place of their birth: for so, I think, we can best explain the increased number of families. In 1899 I was not able to do much in the way of searching,

and only know that there was, at least, one nest in the osiers. The next year showed that the numbers had not diminished. That year, 1900, I knew of three nests and suspected a fourth, but the osier-bed had now been so long neglected that I was unable to search effectively in the tangle of undergrowth. In the autumn of that year the place was sold, and the new owner intended to cultivate the osiers properly, which meant cutting them in the spring. This I knew would probably drive the birds away, and I interceded with him for them, with the result that he promised to leave them a bit of cover for next year's nesting. But from this time forward the fortunes of the little colony began to decline. I never found more than one nest in a year after this : it seemed as if the bit of cover left them at one end of the osiers could suffice for no more.

Yet in 1903 I found that beside the one pair that continued to find accommodation in the osier-bed, one other pair, at least, was trying to nest elsewhere. They tried cow-parsnip, nettles, and other tall plants growing under the railway bank close by : but here they were exposed to misfortunes that had never befallen them in their old haunts. In the osiers no one ever discovered them but myself or my chosen friends : I have known a ploughboy take his rest and his midday meal within three yards of a nest, and never think of looking for one. But the plants in which they were now driven to hang their beautiful nests were cut down with the rest of the grass on the railway banks, and made into hay. Then,

alas, my friend the farmer who owned the osiers forgot his promise and cut them all down in the spring of 1904, and this was the crown of their disasters. After trying to effect their nesting in a field of beans (where I found distinct traces of an attempt to string the bean-stems together as they had been used to do with meadow-sweet or osiers), and also, as I felt sure, in a wheat-field, they seemed to give it up as a bad job, and in 1905 I heard no more singing in or around that osier-bed. Next year there was a single pair in the other, where I had originally discovered them thirteen years before: but here they were disturbed by men working at a new bit of line hard by, and since then they have entirely disappeared from our neighbourhood. I have searched at the right time in the old places and in many others for miles around, but all in vain. But since then an observer not so very far away, in Worcestershire, has recorded, in *British Birds* (vol. iii. 157, and v. 106), the formation of a little colony, and it is particularly interesting to me to find that his birds did actually succeed in hanging their nest among the stalks of corn and charlock in a field of wheat, and that another pair had tried, unsuccessfully, like mine, to make bean-stalks serve their purpose.

And now for the moral of this tale and, indeed, of much that I have said in this chapter. Birds have inherited traditional habits of nesting, and if you can secure that they shall find conditions suitable to these habits, they will probably increase in numbers in a particular spot

or district. If, on the other hand, you fail to provide them with what they want, they will be discouraged, decrease in numbers, and finally desert you. If I had been able to purchase that now historical little osier-bed, and so to keep it in a condition suited to their needs, I make no doubt that I should still be enjoying their singing every June, and enjoying, too, the pride and privilege of admitting trusted friends to the sacred precincts. I may close this retrospect with the remark, most satisfactory to me and most creditable to human nature, that though I took many friends and Oxford pupils to those precincts, not a single one ever betrayed my secret, or brought a visitor without letting me know beforehand: and whatever damage was done to the interests of my Marsh-warblers was done by human beings unwittingly, and in pursuance of their own duties. Neither farmer, nor ploughboy, nor plate-layer on the line ever for a moment entertained the smallest ill-will towards them.

POSTSCRIPT, SEPTEMBER 1912.

The foregoing chapter was written before any of our spring migrants had thought of returning to our shores. So far as I have been able to observe this spring, I find the following facts worth noting: 1. The species that is steadily on the increase, as indeed it has been for several years, is the Willow-wren, with whose gentle meditative strain all our woods were musical in May. 2. The Swallows were abundant, but the House-martins

were late in arriving and, on the whole, few in numbers. 3. The Tree-pipit, which for several years I rarely saw here, has increased in numbers this summer, and several pairs have nested along the railway. 4. No Redstarts appeared in the spring, but just lately I have occasionally seen a young bird (e.g. this afternoon) showing his red tail in a hedge. 5. The Red-backed Shrike, which used to be fairly well distributed, but was rare last year, has only been seen by me once this season. 6. Yellow Wagtails have been very scarce, except after the moult, when I used to see three or four in the flooded meadows.

To make up for these shortcomings we have had a pleasant surprise. A pair of Stonechats, for the first time in our records, brought off a brood in April by the road-side near Churchill Heath farm; I saw old and young together. They tried for a second brood in June, and were robbed of their young, probably by a stoat or weasel, for the nest was not disturbed though the eggs were gone. This nest was in a well-concealed hole in a bank facing away from the road, and would certainly not have been found if my young friend, William Nash, had not just then been in charge of cows along the road-side pasture. The same boy ten days later detected another nest which this persevering couple had built, this time (strange to say) only a couple of feet from the road, in grass at the roots of a very tiny thorn-bush. Six eggs were laid again, and all was going well, when a road-mender (not of Kingham parish, I am glad to

say) came this way, and in an idle moment chopped down the little bush and unwittingly destroyed the nest and eggs. Yet after all these little heroes made yet another nest! I was myself away in Edinburgh, but the same intelligent boy assured me that this time they met with no disasters; and I do not doubt him, for by this time he had come to know them well, and was all along deeply interested in their fortunes.

CHAPTER VI

SOME FLOWERING PLANTS OF KINGHAM

KINGHAM lies in what may be called a basin—the wide basin of the Upper Evenlode, whose two tributaries have here formed considerable valleys to east and west of the main stream, giving the whole region, as seen from the hills around us, the appearance of a plain rather than a valley. To this feature of the country is mainly due its healthy breezy climate, which is cold without being too cold. It is a delightful country for an active man to live in, whether he hunts or cycles, or humbly walks, as I do; and my long walks with Colonel Barrow, usually to some point on the hills to east or west of us, were chiefly what fascinated me forty years ago, and fixed me here in time as a resident. True, if our walks had been limited to roads, I might have cared less about the life here; but I soon found that one great glory of Kingham is in the footpaths that lead in every direction, which are not merely short cuts from one point to another, but often stretch away over grass-fields for miles, without once bringing you to the sight of a road. Take, for example, the footpath to Bledington; it crosses the Evenlode and two railways, takes you up to the village, and leads to the extremely interesting church of Bledington by a short fragment of

road: then plunges into a vast region of pasture, across which for two miles or so you must trace it with some discrimination, till you begin to climb the Cotswold ridge, and find yourself at last on a road again at the village of Westcote. I have known our late rector, who as a hunting man knew every field here as well as he knew his own garden, completely lost in a fog in this solitary region, when returning on foot from a call. He was forced to find his way back again up the hill to a road.

The villages of Icomb and Fifield can be reached in much the same way, and the latter ramble has greater variety, as the path passes through a part of Bruern Wood before it mounts the Cotswold slope towards Fifield and the Merrymouth Inn. To east and north of us the roads are more handy and the paths less far-reaching: and the road up to White Quar is comparatively free from motors, for which a walker hard of hearing has now to be constantly on the look-out. Just here, however, as I was mounting this very hill, my doctor, an old and valued friend, nearly ran over me some time ago; and promised that if he did not end me in this way, he would at least mend me for nothing. But there is no need to stick to the road, here or anywhere, unless the fields be very miry in a wet season; for whether or no there are footpaths, no discreet walker, who understands the farmer's needs and wishes, should ever meet with any opposition to his free passage over the fields. To me all farmers and all land-owners have been uniformly benevolent for the

last forty years and more. If I meet a farmer unknown to me when I am so trespassing, I almost always have a question to ask him which leads to a pleasant talk. The last one I met was in Icomb parish, where I happened to be prowling about after nests and plants; he told me two interesting facts—first, that a certain plant grew in the field where we were standing, which I directly afterwards found to be true; and secondly, that the celebrated ‘lobs’ of my friend, Mr. Simpson-Hayward, the owner of the land, had no terrors for the youthful cricketers of his own village.

The many field-paths, and the welcome almost always accorded to a civil and reasonable trespasser, give a botanist searching this district a great advantage. Not that I am a botanist, nor indeed, that this bit of country is a specially interesting one botanically. But beyond doubt we have a great variety of plants, answering to the great variety of level and also of soil, to be met with in a walk from the Evenlode to the hill-tops. And though we are mere amateurs, my sister and I have both of us a great interest in flowering plants. We have botanical friends, and books of botany: and of the latter, two in particular are a constant pleasure and give us much occupation from time to time. One of these is the original edition of Sowerby’s great work, which my grandfather was wise enough to take in as it came out in parts: it is, of course, botanically speaking, ancient history, but the beauty of the plates makes up for scientific defects, which, after all, can be readily

corrected by reference to later works. The other is the translation of Kerner's great *History of Plants*, which lets us into a hundred secrets of plant-life, some, at least, of which we can verify in meadow, wood, or quarry. These, with Mr. Druce's Flora of our county, and two or three useful handbooks, help us to a certain small amount of knowledge, of which we hope to retain some fragments in our treacherous memories.

So I think I may venture on a short chapter about the floral embroidery of our neighbourhood. And I shall interpolate a few remarks on the butterflies which adorn that embroidery; for of these insects I have known something for half a century, and they were the first living creatures to stir in me the collecting instinct. I propose to begin with the flowers of our streams, and of the alluvial meadows through which these flow: then to rise a little higher to the arable and the woodland, by which I mean not only actual wood, but well-timbered pastures: and lastly, to climb to the hills, and the quarries which are here always on the tops of the hills, where good stone is to be found. Of course, the flora of these three levels overlap at all points, and many plants will be found in all three; but each has its own characteristic blooms, and the first and third are on the whole almost entirely distinct in botanical character.

Let us begin at Coxmoor, the position of which I shall explain in detail in the next chapter. It is undoubtedly an attractive spot, for on each side of the brook there is a strip of almost level sward; on our side the grass is

short and sweet, good pasture for cattle : while on the Bledington side, in another county, it is rough and tussocky, making good nesting-ground for the peewits that are here a great part of the year.

Before the stream itself begins to put on its floral dress, these strips are for some weeks brilliant with marsh marigolds, or kingcups, as I like to call them. In May 1911 the display was magnificent, and the rapid growth of these large-leaved plants gave the peewits a welcome cover. The great mass of bloom was on the further side, and here, too, when the kingcups faded, there suddenly broke out such a wealth of red campion as I have never seen before. It seemed as if an invisible gardener had arranged a succession of gorgeous colours, lasting from April into June.

Meanwhile the Evenlode itself had begun to display a succession of its own water-plants, each one of which gave us some botanical employment. First came the yellow flags, the bloom of which it was interesting to compare, as regards structure, with our own garden irises. Then came the yellow water lilies (the white ones, still more beautiful, are not here) : and with these the brilliant yellow hues, in which nature seems so greatly to delight in spring and early summer, would have come to an end, had not some creeping moneywort, and here and there a plant of St. John's wort (*H. tetrapterum*), done their best to keep up the tradition of the earlier season. Blues and reds of various tints now began to prevail. The turquoise-blue of the

forget-me-nots never fails from June to October; the water speedwell and brooklime do what they can to help, and here and there the skullcap, a really beautiful plant, shows itself, but modestly, amid the taller herbage by the brook's edge.

But after all, the full dress of the brook is not assumed till the willow-herb and the loosestrife come into bloom. The wealth of the former was so great in 1911 as to overwhelm even the purple loosestrife. By willow-herb I mean, of course, the plant called 'codlins and cream', not the rosebay willow-herb, which loves woods, though it is to be found close by the brook on the railway bank, blooming in September brilliantly, nor the smaller plants of the same genus, which add but little to the splendour of the stream. I suppose the very dry hot summer of last year (1911) exactly suited the constitution of the willow-herb, though I cannot explain why. I notice that particular species of the same genus will differ from one year to another in the vigour with which they grow and bloom: this year (1912), among the thistles the prosperous one is *C. crispus*, which is usually a modest plant, while the marsh thistle, in most years a fine tall growth, in spite of the continued wet weather is poor and shabby-looking, even where it used to be most prominent. It is curious that a large patch of willow-herb on the Kingham brook had pure white flowers in 1911, a variation recorded by Plot in his *Natural History of Oxfordshire* as long ago as 1677. It is a plant dear to me from association with the

Marsh-warbler, which sometimes found it convenient to hang its nest on the growing shoots before the bloom had come. Once, if I remember rightly, the bloom did actually come ere yet the nesting was over.

By mid-September the glory of the willow-herb had long been over, yet it left us a legacy of delicate colours, such as I cannot remember having seen before in such profusion. The prevailing tint is white, but it is faintly tinged with pink, and also with brown. The white is the result of the accumulation of winged seeds, each having silky-white hairs attached to it; the pink is the colour of the long narrow seed-vessels, and the brown is that of the dying leaves. No doubt this is why the plant is called by that pleasant nickname, codlins and cream. To see the colour in perfection you must have a sunny morning in September, when the Goldfinches are busy with the seeds, in company with the Linnets, and possibly a few Redpoles. Then the half-hour you spend by the brook can never be forgotten.

The most beautiful of all the flowers of the Evenlode is seldom seen—I mean the flowering rush. A single head of bloom appeared on the further side of the stream in this meadow last August, but some one found it out and stole it, and I looked in vain for more. I had to content myself with the greatly inferior flowers of the arrow-head (*Sagittaria*) and the common pond-weed (*Potamogeton natans*), which spreads its leaves so carefully and economically across the whole breadth of the stream, to give them all a fair chance of sunlight.

The figwort is here, of course, attracting the wasps by the drops of honey in its corolla; for these are easy of access, and the wasps, which have only short probosces, find them a great boon. This plant (*Scrophularia*) is much in use in the village for burns and other sores, and my old gardener grows it in his cottage garden for such purposes, and has put one plant into mine.

Much more pleasing to me is the water-mint which is now in full bloom, and deliciously scented. The teasel's upright stem and delicate lavender-bloom guarded by its fortress of needles, is abundant a little lower down the river. This year of drought (1911) it withered quickly, and its well-known stem-cups seemed to be holding but little water. In the dry hot June of 1900, when searching in vain for the Melodious Warbler at Lyme Regis, I found these cups so full of water on the dry undercliff that they would have filled my bath in a very few minutes' gathering; the reason, no doubt, was the evaporation from the sea just below. While on this interesting plant, famous in the history of that industry which did so much for us as a nation, I must notice the fact that as early as the thirteenth century, and probably earlier, it was important enough to be reckoned in the parson's tithe in parishes where it grew freely. In 1221, Hugh, Bishop of Lincoln, in drawing up regulations for the new vicarages of Wycombe, Bloxham, and St. Giles (in Oxford), ordained that the vicars should have, among their other tithes, 'all tethe

of tesyls that longyn to the office of fullers,'¹ which shows that the flourishing wool trade was beginning to pass into a manufacture already. Witney was, in the time of Henry III, already a town of clothiers: so we are told by the writer on Industries in the Victoria History of our county. There, and in Oxford, and other county centres, it is probable that the teasel was in demand for carding the wool; but whether in those remote times the plant used was the variety called fuller's teasel, with hooks to the bristles, afterwards specially cultivated for the purpose, or our common brookside plant, I have not been able to discover. But I must now leave the brook, just noting, before I do so, that in two spots far apart from each other, we have the wild black currant hanging over the water. I have never seen fruit on these bushes.

Above the lowest level of stream and water-meadow rises the higher ground of arable or permanent pasture, with stretches of woodland, chiefly on the Gloucestershire side of the Evenlode. The distinction between the two levels is marked in many places in a curious way; the ridges and furrows of ancient ploughing run down to within a short distance of the brook, and then suddenly end. That means that the meadows were liable to be flooded up to that point, and the ploughing necessarily stopped here, leaving a narrow strip for hay.

All these higher fields, if not ploughed, are the homes of certain abundant flowering plants which prefer not

¹ *English Register of Godstow Nunnery*, ed. A. Clark, p. 648.

to be bred in too damp a soil. The earliest of these is my favourite the lesser celandine, the first of that long succession of ' buttercups ' in which our children delight. To my thinking none of the later ones is to be compared with this either for interest or beauty. Its golden star is brighter, of a deeper gold, and larger, growing in size, indeed, as the season advances. Under favourable conditions it may break into bloom very early, though I have had to wait for it till the first days of April in this cold climate. In 1912 January was mild, and in a ditch with a steep little bank facing the midday sun, I found a bloom just showing its gold on January 27.¹ All through February, March, and April, these stars were still shining in the fields and hedgerows, and in some sheltered places they might be found even in the middle of May.

There is, however, an event to be looked for still earlier, which may amuse us with the happy delusion that spring is not far off ; I mean the first appearance of an *arum* (lords and ladies) in some bank facing the sun. These plants sometimes fall victims to hungry thrushes, who dig them up if they are hard up for food ; but otherwise they will be just appearing above ground between Christmas and New Year. They grow with wonderful speed in ' growing ' weather, but sometimes they remain *in statu quo* for a month or more before they show a full green leaf. Later on they become very interesting ; they develop a contrivance for cross-fertilization which is one of the easiest and most pleasing we can examine,

¹ In the same place a bloom appeared January 2, 1913!

and I showed it last spring to an eager group of our schoolboys, who knew exactly where the plant was to be found in abundance, but had not penetrated its mysteries. If you can hit exactly the right week, the trap will be found which imprisons adventurous flies until the pollen falls on them, and then releases them at the right moment to carry it away to other plants.

In the spring, apart from the *Ranunculaceae*, the most characteristic blooms of these pasture-fields are the cowslip and the early purple and spotted orchis. The railway embankment also abounds with cowslips. This is not a primrose country; very few primroses are to be found, even in the woods, except at Bruern, and when the church has to be decorated for Easter, the pilgrimages of depredators are all in that direction. But our light soil suits the cowslip, just as later on it suits that most beautiful of all our flowers, the large blue geranium (*G. pratense*). For geraniums in general we must go as far as Oxford, where they nearly all abound; but I must leave them for the moment till we climb to the tops of our hills.

Many field-plants are curiously local within our district; this, I suppose, is chiefly the result of the nature of the soil. In one spot, and one only, at least in the fields, we have in September the meadow saffron (*Colchicum autumnale*), which sends up a remarkable show of leaves without blooms in the spring. In one wood this plant is to be found, and there, in order to get forward to the light, it produces flower-stalks of

prodigious length, such as we never see in the pasture. Then in one field only near here is the beautiful thorny rest-harrow to be found, ruining the pasture, and apparently ineradicable, and in the next field is a single spot where I found this year that curious fern, the adder's-tongue.

I notice the same local tendency of plants also in the corn-fields. The poppies, it is true, are everywhere, but the purple corn-cockle, surely one of the most beautiful of our flowers, is hardly to be found but in one field, and this year, as that field is in roots, I have not seen a single bloom. The bright blue corn-flower (*Centaurea cyanus*), an entirely different plant (for the other is a pink by descent), is commoner, but still local, and there is only one field known to me where it grows abundantly, and in the society of the yellow chrysanthemum, making a never-to-be-forgotten glory of colour in July and August. Even the little corn buttercup (*R. arvensis*), a most modest retiring plant, does not seem to occur in every corn-field.

These are all beautiful flowers; but there are many in these fields that are not exactly pleasing, some that are a positive nuisance to the farmer. The tough yarrow with its head of insipid white flowers will now and then, probably as the result of some manuring of a grass field, spread itself persistently for a season. This year, 1912, which in other ways has brought so much discomfort to the farmers, has also been a happy time for their enemy the yarrow, which is tough, dull, and uninteresting, as well as harmful to the pastures.

Even in my garden it has been unusually persistent, and upon it in one place there appeared in July a hideous dark jelly-like substance, the nature of which I cannot explain: nor do I know whether it had any direct relation to the plant about which it appeared. The wormwood (*Artemisia absinthium*) may have a certain elegance of growth and leaf, but is a disagreeable plant; and so, too, the various kinds of goosefoot (*Chenopodium*) are associated in one's mind with the dung-heaps in which they flourish. I love thistles, but the pale thistle of the arable land is not charming to my eye. More curious, but still less pleasing is the great broomrape, which occasionally pushes up its tall column of brown flowers in a field close to the village.

Before we ascend to higher levels, to the region of the old down grass and the quarries, let us look for a moment into the woods, where nothing meets the eye that is not beautiful. I think we can show such wealth of anemones and bluebells as is not easily to be outdone in any neighbourhood. Our woods are chiefly of oak, and the trunks of oaks wear, in spring, a grey lichen which harmonizes in a most wonderful way with both these flowers, first with the white, then with the blue. When these are over, a closer search may reveal less common plants, e. g. of the orchids, the twayblade, and the bird's-nest orchis, and in Bruern Wood in June the elegant white climbing fumitory (*Corydalis claviculata*). Bruern is, indeed, to judge by Mr. Druce's frequent mention of it in his *Flora of Oxfordshire*, a good hunting-ground for

botanists. I will only mention one more plant of these woods, which grows in great abundance in Churchill Heath Wood, reaching a height sometimes of eight or ten feet at least—the common marsh thistle with its sticky calyx; it is always associated in my mind with one of the most beautiful wood scenes I ever saw. One of the ‘lights’ in this wood was full of these tall thistles, not in themselves so very attractive to the eye; but their blooms were adorned as I have never seen them since. On each bloom there was a Silver-washed Fritillary—nay, if I recollect rightly, there were sometimes two or three on the same flower busy with the honey-glands; and he who knows that lovely insect, which is almost the most beautiful of all our British butterflies, will understand why the scene has never faded from my memory. There must have been a sudden emerging of the perfect insects, after a season peculiarly favourable to the larvae and pupae; for all were in their first glow of rich brown above and silver-green below.¹ The food-plant is the dog violet, which,

¹ I may mention in a footnote one or two other instances of this sudden overpopulation of a single species of butterfly. That of the small Copper this autumn has been alluded to in another chapter. Some years ago the oaks in our woods, and especially in Bruern, swarmed with the Purple Hair-streak from the topmost branches downwards; of late I have seen but few, and as the larva feeds on the oak its chance this year (1912) will be a poor one. Another year the Holly Blue (*P. Argiolus*), which is not a common insect in these parts, was so extraordinarily abundant that it was to be seen even in the streets of Oxford. When I was in the Greek seas in the spring of 1905, the Painted Lady, an insect which is apt even in Britain to have its own years of abundance, swarmed in a most striking way at all the places where

of course, abounds in this wood, and in the railway cutting adjoining it.

Now for the plants of the highest level of this region, which live in cooler and purer air and on a drier soil, and like those of the higher Alps or the chalk downs of southern England, have some peculiar charm about them that I cannot quite explain. On both sides of the Evenlode our hills run up to a height of from six to eight hundred feet above the sea; and there, even if there be but little left of the real old sheep pasture of Cotswolds or Oxfordshire Downs, we can find remnants of it in the form of broad strips of sweet grass by the road-sides, or the vegetation of a deserted quarry. It may be imagination, but when I am up here, the flowers—even those that are also found down below—seem to glow with unwonted light and harmonize with each other more perfectly. But some of them, and of the butterflies that flit about them, are peculiar to the hills. The ‘traveller’s joy’ is here on the hedges in abundance, but rare in the valley. The sweet violets, white, blue, and red, are far more abundant and easy to find than in the richer vegetation of the lower levels. The autumn gentian is here, and the ever welcome *Campanula glomerata*; the harebell is here in its proper home, and the little white flax, and the delicate *Spiraea* called dropwort, less heavily fragrant than its cousin the Meadow-sweet.

we landed. Athens was full of rather seedy old specimens, and on the coast of Asia Minor I noticed the same thing. Lastly, at Avignon and Orange in April 1908, all warm sunny walls were alive with Hummingbird moths.

The quarries are a little peculiar in their flora, and are apt to disappoint us in a dry summer like the one just past, for they absorb heat too eagerly to keep their blooms gay during a drought. A soft damp summer, with occasional sunshine, shows them at their best; and it is (or should be) a real compensation for the woes of such a season to be able to feast the eye up till October with ragwort and knapweed, scabious and poppies, and St. John's wort. Sweet thyme is here in large patches, and the pretty basil thyme, too. Among the other plants of tiny growth the scarlet pimpernel is conspicuous, and once, and only once, we found here a plant of the rarer blue pimpernel. This was in what we call 'White Quar', the nearest of these quarries, and the one out of which our village was built in successive centuries—my own house in the year 1879. I am never tired of visiting it, for the ascent in almost any weather is full of charm, not less on an autumn day like this than in the summer heat. There may be a touch of winter in my thoughts, as there is in the north-west wind that takes me in the flank; but there is much in the autumn of life to think of with pleasure, and there is much in this autumn day to look at with delight. Everywhere the fields are being ploughed, and this means in this country that uniformity of colour is giving way to variety, and dull weak yellows changing into rich reds. From the Quar I can see them ploughing in the vale below, where the field when ploughed becomes a rich chocolate; but up here on the heights there is

more iron in the soil, and the land varies on a sunny day from the brightest terra cotta in the sunshine to a deep rich red in the shady hollows. The flowers of the Quar are made yet more attractive by the butterflies that flit about them. In June the Marbled Whites abound here, and almost any number could be caught in half an hour in some years : so, too, on the Cotswold ridge opposite us they people the flowery strips of turf by the road-sides. But except on such spots you may look in vain for this delightful insect, and the grass on which its larva feeds must, I imagine, be one that is limited to the high ground. The Chalkhill Blue is another species that is here curiously limited in its range ; I have seen it, so far as I can remember, only on the hill beyond Churchill, to which a lane takes off to the right, which I have named ' Butterfly lane ', because these insects seem to have peculiar delight in it. All the common kinds, which luckily include some of the most beautiful, rejoice in the upper part of this lane, and in the field to the right when you have reached the highest point—a field full of strange holes and hollows such as all butterflies delight in.

Further up beyond White Quar, near the Cross Hands Inn, there are more quarries which are the homes of almost all our most beautiful species of thistles ; one of these quarries is just inside the Warwickshire border, and another has to be carried by a drive at the ninth hole of the Chastleton Golf Club. The nodding thistle abounds here—quite the most elegant of its kind, and

also the great woolly thistle (*Cirsium eriophorum*), whose spacious head of woolliness is attractive, but painful to handle. Here, too, of course are the ground thistle and the carline thistle, and others still more common. One August when we had London children in the village, I enticed the boys up to the golf ground, thinking it would amuse them to see me play; but as they insisted on running after my ball and picking it up, I put down my clubs and gave them a lesson on thistles, in which they took a deep interest—for the moment—and as I followed it up with a bread and cheese lunch at the Cross Hands Inn, we became great friends.

There is another quarry, on the road to Chipping Norton, where that very charming little plant *Geranium lucidum* is to be found on a single spot among old boulders. This is not a good geranium country, like the Oxford region or the Chilterns; *G. columbinum* is not often to be found on our hills, and I have never come across *G. rotundifolium* or *pyrenaicum*. But *G. lucidum*, brought down from this quarry, has become a flourishing plant in my garden, and in the summer of 1912, though it seemed to have utterly died away in the drought, the seedlings came up by hundreds exactly where I wished them to. *G. pusillum*, often a largish plant, but always with a small bloom, is to be found in abundance on the edges of these quarries, usually in land which has been ploughed.

I will finish my notes on the quarries with a story of a really rare plant. Some years ago a botanical

friend—one who has been a faithful friend of mine since we were small boys at Marlborough together—came to stay with me in April, and proposed that we should walk to Lyneham camp, in order to look for the perfoliate shepherd's purse (*Thlaspi perfoliatum*), which, as Mr. Druce tells us, grows only in a very few spots near Charlbury and Burford, and nowhere else in the United Kingdom. To Lyneham camp we went, and separated to search in and about the quarries and rough ground adjoining the ancient fortification. I soon fancied I had found it, and signalled to my friend, who came in haste and declared with some contempt that it was only a common species. Now at this moment an old school habit of playing tricks with this valued friend suddenly returned on me, and I picked another specimen of the common plant, and signalled again. This time he was not to be enticed by any such folly. In another minute I found the real thing, and once more signalled, shouting as well. But my friend was deaf, and went on with his own searching. Slowly I made my way to him, and putting on an air of indifference, I casually asked him whether he would condescend to look at what I had in my hand. He did so condescend after a minute or two, and suddenly flung his hat up into the air, where a gust of wind caught it and sent it into the adjoining field, to the immense astonishment of a ploughman working there. We walked home in triumph and amity; but though I have often searched, I have never found this treasure again.

CHAPTER VII

CURIOSITIES OF COXMOOR

THERE is a certain meadow, long and narrow, with the railway as its northern and the Evenlode as its southern boundary, through which a well used footpath leads to Bledington, crossing the brook by a wooden bridge. Beyond this bridge you are as it were in a strange land ; you are not only in a different parish but in a different county ; you may meet labourers whom you do not know, and the farmer, if you come upon him, will behave rather as an acquaintance than a friend. Yet the sensation is not an unpleasant one ; it is apt to be stimulating to the imagination. You are now in the same county as Clifton Down and Avonmouth, and as the high ridge of hill that looks down on Tintern Abbey. The fact that our long meadow is on the very verge of Oxfordshire, and looks across the flowery Evenlode into another long meadow in a foreign land, lends a certain charm to it which even the Yantell does not possess.

I have spoken of this delightful meadow once or twice already. In the map of 1828, it appears as Coxmoor, Coxmoor Closes, Coxmoor Flats, and I imagine that the name was suggested by the water birds which had their home here long ago in beds of sedge and reeds. The lower flat part of the meadow is liable to flood, and

long ago we used to skate on it when it was both flooded and frozen ; now the wettest end of it is planted with osiers, which greatly add to the attractiveness of the spot both for birds and plants and even for human beings. The foot-path to Bledington, after crossing the railway, drops down into the flat just at the corner of this osier-bed, and then skirts it till it reaches the brook and the bridge. Many and pleasant are the walks beyond this bridge, on foot-paths in every direction, even to the high ridge of the Cotswolds ; but I wish to pause here—and indeed those long rambles are for me memories of the past—and call to mind some of the many interesting things I have seen in Coxmoor, things that send you home with curiosity awakened and a new sense of life. No other spot in all our region has given me so many pleasant surprises as this.

Even the path leading down to it from ‘ the Hopper ’, better known now as ‘ Jim Pearse’s Cottage ’, has sometimes provided entertainment. I was one day pursuing my way between the hedge and the corn, and watching some Sparrows and Chaffinches that were picking up grain on the ground and then flying up to the hedge as I approached, when suddenly a Hobby shot over the hedge from behind it, dodged and twisted in the air for a moment, and then flew away towards Bledington Heath with a Chaffinch dangling from his claws. The movements of the Hobby on the wing are more wonderful, I think, than those of any other bird, and I shall have more to say of them directly ; for where a Hobby,

or a pair of Hobbies, are sojourning for a while, they will show you their skill in flight without any shyness. When this one took his prey I was within a few yards, but he was not in the least disconcerted; yet I have known a Sparrow-hawk miss his Wheatear entirely on the crest of a Dorsetshire down, when he suddenly discovered that I was looking at him.

One hot August day some years ago I was walking slowly down this path with the sun blazing in a cloudless sky, and wondering when I might feel the blessing of a cloud once more, when above a tall elm just beyond Coxmoor and the bridge, a quarter of a mile away, I happened to notice a cloudlike dark object. My glass showed me that it was not a distant cloud, but apparently a vast swarm of insects constantly moving: and such I found it to be when I reached the tree. As they were seventy or eighty feet above me I could not then guess what they were; but on my way home I found that all the elms had this same crown of flying creatures, and as I crossed the railway the explanation came to me. All along the railway banks there had been during the summer a most unusual number of ant-hills—hundreds of them in a very short space. From all these nests the male ants must have risen as by some pre-concerted signal, to take the one flight of their lives: or to be more correct, the queen ants must have risen all at once, and been followed by the winged males. I had that August another proof of the mysterious way in which these things happen all at once. I was staying with my

brother at Tunbridge Wells, and noticed that there was an ants' nest under the stone step below his front door. On Saturday August 27, at midday, the winged males were issuing from the crevices and joints in the stonework, and covering the whole surface of the steps. I went to play golf, and when I returned they were all gone, nor did I see anything more of them. Two days later I read in the paper that on that same Saturday at Folkestone, some forty miles away, there had been such huge swarms of winged ants that they almost darkened the air.¹

The hedge along which this path runs is a favourite haunt of both species of Whitethroat, and the loud notes of the lesser one are to be heard here each April and May, though the bird has a peculiar knack of keeping out of sight, which is provoking for a beginner who wants to see it as well as to hear. Then we come to the railway, and here, just as when I wrote *A Year with the Birds*, the Whinchat builds its nest within a few feet of the rails, and sits fast while the London expresses rush past. This year a nest was shown me by a smart little boy in the school—not the one who soon afterwards discovered the three Stonechats' nests in succession, as I have already told. The nest, like all the Whinchats' nests I have ever seen here, was placed in a hole in the bank, beautifully concealed by a large leaf; but when the sun was shining it was just possible to see the blue of the

¹ See Bates's *Naturalist on the Amazons*, p. 15, for similar proceedings of the Saüba ant of South America.

eggs, if the bird were off, without descending into the ditch. Another favourite spot for the Whinchats is a little further on in Coxmoor itself, just where the path reaches the osier-bed, which is fenced off by posts and rails. These birds always like to have a convenient perching place near the nest, where the cock can sing to his mate on the nest, and where the young can sit under the parents' watchful eyes as soon as they are ready to fly. Along the railway the telegraph wires serve this purpose, and here the posts and rails. One day in April some three years ago I had strolled down here looking out for the Whinchats, which had not yet arrived, and as I passed this spot they were still absent. I went on across the brook, and as I approached the place on my return I saw a little bird fly across the osiers *from the south-east*, and perch, not on the posts and rails, but on a high bough of an elm which stands close to this corner of the osier-bed. I put up my glass to see what it could be, and found it was a cock Whinchat, which surprised me, for so far as I could remember I had never seen a Whinchat perch so high on any tree. It preened its feathers, and looked about it; and then it dawned on me that this bird was surveying, from this coign of vantage, the scene of its last summer sojourn, to make sure that there was no doubt about it, and that all was still as it should be. It is seldom indeed that one gets the chance of seeing a summer migrant actually reach its home after a journey that may have begun in central Africa. This pleasant experience happened in the

identical spot where many years before I first heard the song of the Marsh-warbler, as I have told in another chapter.

A little further on, by the side of the brook, I once had a curious adventure with a Partridge. I had heard shots on the rising ground on the Gloucestershire side, and saw a Partridge fly towards me and alight on my side of the brook a few feet from the water. As it remained motionless, I went towards it, but it would not stir. I walked first one side of it, then the other, passing it at about a foot's distance, without producing any effect on it. I did this once or twice, and finally touched it with my stick, when it suddenly flopped into the water, swam or shuffled across, and disappeared among the reeds on the other side. No doubt it had been hit, and felt that its best chance was to keep perfectly still. I hope it escaped after all.

But the most wonderful scenes I have ever witnessed in Coxmoor are the September gatherings of Swallows and House-martins, and chiefly of Swallows, before roosting in the osier-bed. I first began to notice this in 1898, and in 1899 it was still more wonderful. On September 8, 1898, one of the hottest days of recent times, when the thermometer at Greenwich reached 92, I found thousands of Swallows circling over the osiers at a great height, and more constantly arriving, mainly from north and east. They were like gnats for multitude, and filled the still hot air with continuous sound. Suddenly there appeared among them, flying with incredible

swiftness, what seemed a Swallow twice or thrice the ordinary size; then another, and for some time I watched these two dashing—but this is a bad word for that marvellous and most graceful performance—through the cloud of smaller birds, which that night seemed to make no obvious effort to escape them. These swift cruisers were a pair of Hobbies, perhaps accompanying the Swallows on their journeys, in order to find a supper every evening.¹ I did not actually see them secure a victim, but every day for a week or so I found the dead bodies of two or three Swallows, apparently knocked down but not devoured. I noted in my diary that the Hobbies seemed to be trying to cut off the Swallows as they descended into the osiers, which they did in zigzag fashion, as if to make it more difficult for the pirates to catch them. If the Hobbies thus kept low, the Swallows kept high, and if the Hobbies followed them up, the Swallows would descend and make for the osiers by skimming over the grass. When they flew high, the Swallows became sometimes invisible to me without the glass. The finer and clearer the weather, the higher they ascended before dropping into the osiers.

One evening I was tempted to sneak into the osiers while all these wonders were going on, and take up a position some way inside: they were then considerably higher than my head. It was a curious experience; life of the most vivid kind was all around me. A Pied

¹ See A. C. Smith's *Birds of Wiltshire*, p. 73. But we have here a pair of Hobbies, who breed near at hand.

Wagtail was perched on a branch close by me, and many others were about; they always use the osiers for roosting, undeterred by the multitudes of a different race. Swallows were dropping down about me, and went on chattering as soon as they had settled themselves; the place was full of sound and motion. When I started to extricate myself from this extraordinary scene there was a sudden rush of birds upwards, but they settled down again almost directly. Luckily it was an old coat that I had on, for I was never able to wear it again.

For three years this performance was not repeated; the travelling hosts seemed to pass over us, and I could not discover where they found good quarters. I had by this time come to the conclusion that they must have been birds gathered together from a wide region, gaining continually in numbers till they reached the southern coast; and such vast numbers must have good thick cover to accommodate them. A well-grown or a neglected osier-bed would suit them better than one in which the osiers are insufficiently grown, as ours were during those years. Then there came a year, 1902, in which, on September 21, I found the same wonderful sight as before, but this time with a difference which was amusing. I went down at a quarter to six to see what was going on, and found some hundreds of Starlings performing their familar evolutions; these continued till 6.5, when they all swept into the osiers and disappeared in an instant. Seeing that Swallows and Martins were collecting overhead, I remained to watch.

The numbers of the Swallow kind gradually increased until the sky became alive with them, and at about 6.20 they began to drop into the cover by twos and threes as usual. Apparently this did not please the Starlings, for in a minute or two a large detachment of them arose suddenly from the osiers, swept up among the gathering Swallows, who seemed to retreat before them—and then as suddenly descended into the cover again. It is possible that I may have been mistaken as to their motive in rising, but it was hardly possible to avoid the momentary conclusion that they wished to have the osiers to themselves. The Swallows continued to circle at a great height about the place, and the Starlings made no further movement; I saw a few Swallows slip into a corner of the osier-bed, but as far as I could see the great mass of them moved on elsewhere. For a long time I could see no Hobby; but just as it was growing dusk, one passed me at incredible speed, in pursuit of some stragglers that were flying low. I continued to watch till the 30th, the show gradually diminishing in immensity and interest, and was pleased to find that the Starlings thought it as well not to be annoyed every evening after they had settled themselves down, and gradually gave up the game. This year I learnt a new fact, as the reader will have noticed: that the Starlings go to roost before the Swallows. They are ready for bed exactly at sunset, while Swallows and Martins will wait, if the weather be clear, for fully twenty minutes later. The reason no doubt is that the air is still full of insects

after sunset, while the Starlings have finished their feeding on the meadows long before.

I have often witnessed the roosting of the Swallows in more recent years, but have never known them so regularly pursued by Hobbies, or annoyed by Starlings. In September 1906, as I was watching them with Mr. Basil de Sélincourt, we saw a fox creep along the meadow in the growing dusk, and sneak into the osiers ; but whether he proposed to himself to sup on Swallow I cannot say. The mention of this fox reminds me that another nocturnal beast of prey is not unknown in these windings of the Evenlode. The otter hounds usually find somewhere along here, though the last time they came they drew a blank. But a little higher up the stream I once, in broad daylight, found a fine chub with a large mouthful taken out of him : it looked as if the otter had been suddenly disturbed and had left his dinner on the grass, instead of carrying it off in his mouth.

Just where the path reaches the osier-bed, a few years ago, a Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*) remained for about six weeks, and contrived to pick up a living in the ooze left by floods. We have these Gulls as visitors for a day or so occasionally, especially in stormy weather ; we are not more than thirty miles from a tidal river. This bird was one of a small company which had moved on, leaving their companion, sick or injured in some way, to take its chance. It used to fly a short way when we approached it, but soon dropped again ; strange

to say, though it was for so long within a stone's throw of a public path, no man or boy molested it, and I have every reason to believe that it recovered and departed.

It is seldom that any other kind of Gull makes its appearance here. But in March 1888, when after long frost and snow the weather suddenly broke, Gulls were so numerous at Oxford that I was on the look-out for them here, and here I found not only the Black-headed and Herring Gulls, but an astonishing number and variety of all such birds as '*rimantur prata Caystri*'. This was not actually in Coxmoor, but in a neighbouring field over which the water from the brook had been allowed to run for some time, so that it alone was soft and oozy while the others were in a state of frozen slush. The list recorded in my diary is worth inserting here, for I have never again seen quite such an assemblage. Besides the Gulls there were two Ringed Plovers, a Dunlin, a Curlew (almost the only one I have seen here), endless Peewits, Snipe getting up together in wisps, Wild Duck, Woodpigeons, Fieldfares, Redwings, Pied Wagtails, Grey Wagtails (a pair), Meadow Pipits, Crows, Rooks, Starlings, a Kestrel, and a Goldcrest. It is needless to say that they did not stay long; the thaw soon reduced all fields to the same level of public utility for the birds, which dispersed over the country or back to the salt water of the Severn estuary.

Not till this present summer (1912) of continued wet and flood have I seen anything like this gathering of species. At the beginning of August, when some birds, e.g.

the Sandpipers, are travelling east and south, there was a heavy flood in the Evenlode, which suggested to my friend Mr. Parsons Guy that he should take his gun and look for duck. Ducks there were in plenty, but he could not get a shot at them; and noticing some little snipe-like birds by the edge of the water, he fired at two of them as they rose. Both fell, but only one was secured by his retriever: the other, for which I searched in vain some days after, dropped on the other side of the stream. Luckily I met Mr. Guy a day or two later, and he showed me the bird, which at the moment I took to be a Green Sandpiper, as its upper tail coverts were bright white; but a more careful examination of wings, axillary plumes, and tail, made me feel pretty sure that I had in my hand the only Wood Sandpiper yet recorded in the county. And so it proved; I sent the bird to Mr. Aplin, in whose collection it now is. This constituted a new distinction for Kingham and duly appeared in the new Parish Magazine.

This Wood Sandpiper (*Totanus glareola*) was one of a small party of seven or eight birds with white upper tail coverts, of which I had a glimpse a day or two later in Coxmoor. Whether they were all of the same species, or included Green Sandpipers, I could not be sure; but on August 16, Mr. Guy brought me one of the latter species. The Common Sandpiper was numerous at the same time, and thus our quiet pensive Evenlode began to remind me of the mountain streams that talk as they flow, where the piping of the breeding Sandpipers

delights the fisherman's ear. The number of other visitors was not nearly so great as in 1888, but it was very interesting to walk along the railway embankment, from Coxmoor past Dining Acres and the Varnels, and see the immense flocks of Peewits, the Wagtails pied and yellow—of the yellow more than I have seen all this summer: a few Pipits—Meadow Pipits from the hills, and Tree Pipits of our own rearing, three Herons side by side, probing the ooze with their bills: Moorhens, Woodpigeons, and three young Cuckoos; while Swallows, House-martins, and Sand-martins, skimmed unceasingly over the flood water catching flies.

Such are some of the curiosities of Coxmoor which are obvious to the eye of an amateur naturalist. Many more would in such a likely spot be revealed to the eye and mind of a *real* naturalist, such as my friend Dr. L. C. Miall, whose name occurs to me at this moment because I have been reading his deeply interesting work on the early naturalists, while engaged on this chapter. Inside that overgrown bed of osiers, for example, how much there would be to claim the attention of one who is at once botanist and zoologist! There comes back upon my memory a good example, though I am just twenty years older since I came upon it.

On June 19, 1892, my friend Aplin came over from Bloxham to see and hear the Marsh-warbler in this osier-bed. My diary tells me that we did both hear and see him satisfactorily: that we watched him singing with his bill wide open, showing a yellow 'gape' above

a white fluffy throat ; and that he imitated that morning the Lark, Nightingale, Thrush, Greenfinch, Black-cap, Chaffinch, Redstart, Swallow, Linnet, Yellow Wagtail, and Whinchat. My mind was therefore fully occupied, and when I passed a broken bit of rotten wood *lying on a willow leaf*, I failed to notice that such a thing was hardly possible in nature. I was a little ahead of Aplin, forcing my way through the dense cover, when I heard him say, ' Here is a pretty case of protective colouration for you ! ' I went back, and found that my bit of stick was a buff-tip moth in repose, with its wings rolled round its body. ' The purple and grey of the sides of the moth,' writes Professor Poulton,¹ ' together with the pale yellow tint of the parts which suggest the broken ends, present a most perfect resemblance to wood in which decay has induced that peculiar texture in which the tissue breaks shortly and sharply, as if cut, on the application of pressure or the force of an insignificant blow.' The moth had not taken up such a position so as to make his mimicry quite invincible ; but he succeeded in taking me in. At the moment my ears were intent on the bird, to see which at that moment was impossible ; and the sight of my eyes was without intelligence.

¹ *The Colours of Animals*, p. 57.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GREAT THUNDERSTORM OF

JUNE 7, 1910

THIS storm will live in the memory of every boy and girl in Kingham who experienced it ; but some of them, who wrote me letters in which some attempt was made to describe it, will probably have a more vivid recollection of it than the rest. I was myself away in Edinburgh lecturing ; but before leaving I had asked the master to let the children in the upper standards (as many as were so disposed) write me a letter about anything they pleased. I had once before found this a good way of testing their quality, and now the great storm gave them a second chance and a happy one. Hardly a letter failed to mention it, though the boys seemed more excited about it than the girls ; even if the beginning were about birds or cricket, the writer was sure to come to the storm sooner or later.

It was so formidable, by all accounts, that I cannot say I am sorry to have missed it ; but I regret that I have to describe it at second hand. The season was a very electrical one, the air heavy, damp and close rather than hot, and round about Kingham there had been much growling of thunder in the distance for several days. Storms broke over many parts of the country,

but none of them seemed to relieve the atmosphere, and the day after our storm was as heavy and lurid as any that preceded it. Very little damage was done by these electrical displays ; here no human being was hurt, and sheep and cattle happily escaped. It was one of those storms of which the fury is not concentrated in a narrow space, but dispersed over a large one, and accompanied by a deluge of rain. So far as my experience goes, the worst damage is often done by sharp and sudden storms, which seem to put their whole anger into one or two strokes. Many trees were struck, but not one of them was shattered like the great King's oak at Chastleton many years ago, when that magnificent piece of perfect timber was split right down the middle, and a huge limb carried to a distance of more than twenty yards. I was told at the time that this extraordinary explosion was the work of a travelling storm that frightened no one ; ours frightened every one, and lay around the village for hours, yet was not really dangerous. Considering how many objects were actually struck, it is astonishing how little real damage was done.

It began about half-past seven in the evening, after a very close and heavy day. The daughter of my old housekeeper had started for a walk with my dog, and was about a mile from the house when it became alarming. She told me afterwards that while walking that mile she felt so strangely oppressed that she could hardly get forward, and that at last the growing darkness and the increasing anger of the thunder-growls made her

turn homewards. Unluckily for her, the dog just then vanished in some turnips and she was delayed in trying to recover him, so that the storm was fairly upon her before she reached home. She described to me with great vigour how the men working on their allotments, and others playing cricket, seemed to become suddenly aware of danger, threw down their tools, and started to run home: as a rule a thunderstorm does not put them out much, for all their lives they have had occasionally to face one in the open. About eight o'clock the thunder and lightning began to be incessant, and for three or four hours never ceased for a moment, while the rain poured down in a continual stream. During all this the only two human beings on my premises sat on the stairs in the dark, with my dog, as apparently the safest place and least trying to the eyes, wondering what was going to happen next.

Meanwhile others had been cut off from their homes, and were in worse plight. The rector of Daylesford arrived by train at Adlestrop station, and had to wait there an hour and a half, after which he contrived to get home—about half a mile—but not without wading through water which was in the lower ground up to his knees. My neighbour Mr. Phillips did not venture to cross the road from his barn to his house, and his son, a boy in the school, thus described the situation in his letter to me. 'I was playing at cricket over in our orchard, and I could hear distant mumblings of thunder, and it came nearer and nearer. At last we had finished

the game, and it began to rain. My father was getting sacks out of the wagon to put into the barn, and he had got to get about four more to put in, when all of a sudden there was a very vivid flash of lightning, which very much startled me. Then Mr. Hands came into the barn for shelter, and it began pouring with rain, and there we were, stuck in the barn for nearly an hour and a half, but the storm lasted about four and one half hours. The lightning was so vivid that it blinded me for three or four seconds. Then we came out, and I came up over the tops of my shoes in water. When it lightened (there was some one standing over the other side of the road), I could see him as plainly as I could in the day time.'

The volume of water that came down must have been very great, for the lane that joins the two streets of the village was flooded some three feet deep, and the refuse swept by the water into the crannies of the wall that separates the lane from Hamblett's orchard is still there in some places. The children were much struck by the fact that some eighty pails of water had been taken out of a single cottage up on the Green, for it comes again and again in their letters. Here is a specimen :

'In some houses it (the water) was over a foot deep. Out in the roads and fields it was from two (the last word scratched out) three to four feet deep. The lightning set fire to Mr. Lainchbury's pea straw rick, and it set light to some corn ricks on Cornwell Hill. The chimney of Mr. G. Johnson's house got struck off by the lightning,

and a meteorite fell on his lawn. (This was at Oddington : where this boy got hold of so recondite a word as meteorite I do not know.—W. W. F.) The day after the storm they took eighty pails of water out of Miss Joynes' house, and they had to put her furniture upstairs to keep it out of the water. It was a machine that turns the hay that drew the lightning to the rick. Mr. Fields had over thirty chickens drowned, and Mr. Hamlet had nearly fifty chicken besides Duck drowned, and he had to knock some great planks down or the pigs would have been drowned.'

Perhaps the most interesting fact of all is recorded by a quiet boy who is rather a favourite of mine : he is not so brilliant a writer as some of them, as will be seen by the following fragment, but it contains a valuable fact.

'The weight of water that fell upon an acre was nearly 400 tons. (This is second-hand, of course, and probably comes from a newspaper.) The lightning struck the Manner House and knocked a lot of slates off of it. *When it was thundering and lightning the cuckoo was singing all the time.*'

I asked this boy when I returned home whether he was prepared to stick to his assertion that the cuckoo sang *all* the time, and he showed some sign of hedging : but he is a perfectly honest boy, and would not have stated what he knew to be untrue. As regards the 'Manner' house, i.e. the beautiful old building adjoining 'Vicarage Close', of which I have already spoken, it was most fortunate that this storm did not destroy the one really choice and unique architectural detail in the

village. What was struck was the sixteenth-century chimney, a drawing of which, by Mr. Stephen Warner, is reproduced on the cover of this book. On the top of the chimney was a brass vane, and this tempted a flash, luckily a mild one, to make for earth that way. The vane was crumpled up, and the stone tiles knocked about, but the chimney itself escaped with no damage except the loss of a bit of carved stone on one side.

So much for the storm itself. A month later, on my return from Edinburgh, I began to amuse myself with observing the damage done to trees by the lightning, and there were so many of them that I had interesting objects for many walks and drives. Only one tree was killed outright: this was an oak, pointed out to me by Rev. L. R. Phelps from the Merrymouth Inn, where he was staying in August. It was then conspicuous against the rest of the trees of the wood at the edge of which it stood, by its uniform brown colour; and when I examined it, I found its bark completely peeled off all round the lower part of the trunk. Though the timber was not visibly injured, the shock to the tree's system must have been great. This last June the same thing happened to an oak near Daylesford, except that the amount of bark stripped was in that instance much less.

A tall elm close to the level crossing on the way to Churchill had a broad ribbon of bark ripped off, and at once began to show signs of damage by loss of leaves in its top twigs. The crossing keeper told me that he was opening the gate for a train at the moment when this

tree was struck only about twenty yards away from him, and that the lightning seemed to come up out of the ground, as I have myself seen it appear to come up out of the lake of Geneva. Another elm only some two hundred yards away was treated in exactly the same way. Both these trees have since been felled, and I was able to trace the progress of the current from top to bottom. The breadth of the ribbon of bark stripped off varied, as it seemed, exactly with the circumference of the bough or trunk, getting larger as it neared the earth. Occasionally hard knobs of bark were left in the bared strip, which the lightning seems, so to speak, to have jumped over, following (as it always does) the line of least resistance; and this was more often to be seen on elms than on other trees. I have just been to look at the tall Lombardy poplar in the field behind the rectory, the tallest tree in the parish, conspicuous from all the hills around us. This tree looks as if it had been struck again and again, and is now almost a ruin.¹

I know of a young ash near the village, which was treated in a singularly considerate way in this great storm. It looked as if a huge cat had been climbing up it, and tearing at the bark; in one place there were three great scratches parallel with each other. As far as I could make out, the current was not strong enough to tear away the bark where it was at all rough and tough, yet the bark of an ash is by no means as hard and knobby

¹ Since this chapter was written the poplar has fallen in a gale. It was quite hollow near the ground.

as that of an elm. This tree was hardly damaged, as far as outward appearance can show, yet it does not seem to be flourishing as usual this year. I have been told by one in the village who ought to know, that a tree is never much good as timber after it has been struck, and should be felled as soon as possible: but I have found examples of stricken elms which have lived as well-looking trees for many years. The scar of the wound is left, but in course of time something in the nature of bark seems to be formed again, as with the human skin after a bad burn.

For more than a year I failed to find any book which might help to explain the questions suggested by these observations. Why did the lightning treat different kinds of trees in such very different ways? Why, among the damaged trees was there not a single beech? Why were the elms let off with the loss of a ribbon of bark, while the oaks were peeled, and in two cases at least fatally peeled? It is a common belief here that beeches are never struck, and I wondered whether possibly the lightning slips down their smooth barks, meeting no obstacle, and therefore (as on a metal conductor) leaving no traces. To such questions as these I could find no answer: nor could I find any explanation of the manner and action of the lightning stroke.

At last a friendly bookseller, to whom I made known my need, sent me the fourth and last volume (by Dr. Hess) of Dr. Schlich's great *Manual of Forestry*, translated from the German for the use of our forestry students. This

volume is devoted to the subject of the protection of forests from all kinds of enemies, animate and inanimate ; and almost at the very end of it (barely even indicated in the synopsis), I found half a dozen pages of very useful information about the effects of lightning on trees. Yet it is plain from these pages that my difficulties are real ones, and that the subject needs further scientific investigation. There seem to be many theories of the action of lightning when a tree is struck, of which the following is given as an example (p. 659) :

‘The wet cambium¹ zone conducts the electrical discharge, and the contained water is suddenly converted into vapour. The expansion thus caused strips off the bark at the points of least resistance, and if the bark be smooth (?) and thin, large pieces of it may be removed. The wood may also be split from the top of the tree downwards, the lightning entering at the fine twigs on the top of the tree and running down the stem straight or spirally according to the direction of the fibres.’

Other theories are not mentioned, and this one does not quite fit in with my experience ; for the elm, which of all our trees here is the one most commonly struck (probably as being the most abundant tree on our lower levels), and stripped of a ribbon of bark, is protected by bark which is neither smooth nor thin.

So too in dealing with the question why one kind of

¹ Cambium, a layer of tissue formed between the wood and the bark, consisting partly of nascent wood, partly of nascent bark (Kerner, *History of Plants*, Glossary at end of work).

tree is more liable to be struck than another, Dr. Hess seems a little uncertain: he thinks that deep-rooted trees are more exposed to the danger, 'perhaps on account of their roots forming better conductors to the moist subsoil than those of shallow-rooted species.' This again does not fall in with my experience of the liability of the elm, a very shallow-rooted tree. A page or two further on it is suggested that oily trees are better protected than starchy trees, because oil is a bad conductor of electricity; and oily trees are beech, walnut, birch, and lime, none of which, so far as I know, have ever been struck about here. Starchy trees on the other hand, trees that is, whose starch is not converted into oil in winter and spring, are good conductors, and among these are the oak, poplar, ash, and elm, and in the summer also the Scotch fir, all of which have been the prey of lightning within a mile or two of Kingham. Here my experience supports the evidence of the book, and on the whole also it falls in with the additional statement (p. 665) that trees growing in damp soil are less liable to serious injury than those in hard dry ground, where, it seems, the lightning may spread from root to root of neighbouring trees, and cause them to die in groups.

Whatever be the uncertainty of these explanations, the facts adduced as to the relative liability of different species are incontrovertible and of the utmost interest. Dr. Hess, the real author of this fourth volume of Schlich's Forestry, with true German patient thoroughness, made annual observations from 1874 to 1890 in the

forests of Lippe-Detmold, and his results of these sixteen years are given on p. 662, in the form of a table. The forest was stocked as follows: oaks, 11 per cent., beech 70, spruce 13, and Scotch fir 6. The number of oaks struck was 310, of beech 33, of spruce 39, and Scotch firs 108. The danger therefore, considering the beech as 1, was 6 for a spruce, 37 for a Scotch fir, and 60 for an oak.

I have found these facts very interesting in two ways. First, the popular idea that beeches are never struck is on the whole confirmed; this happens so seldom in a great beech forest like that of Lippe-Detmold, that it is hardly likely to happen at all in our district. Secondly, the fact that the oak is by far the most frequent victim suggests an explanation of the well-known close relation of the oak and the god of lightning, not only in ancient Greece and Italy, but throughout the temperate region of Europe and Asia, where the oak is found. In the third edition of his *Golden Bough*, Dr. J. G. Frazer has devoted a very interesting chapter to this subject (vol. ii, ch. xx), and is inclined to guess that the old worshippers got the clue to a lightning-god from the oak, because they used oak sticks to produce fire by rubbing, and naturally connected the spark thus aroused with the flash of the lightning. But he had no such statistics to help him as those I have just mentioned: and now it seems more probable, to me at least, that the association of the oak with the lightning was simpler and more direct. There may have been other contributing causes,

but the oak was a tree to be venerated because it was struck by lightning so often. And this falls in with the fact that both in Greece and Italy places struck by lightning were considered sacred, i. e. belonging to a deity.

Before I close this short chapter I wish to refer to the vivid account of another great storm in our neighbourhood left us by the Rev. J. Jordan in his *Parochial History of Enstone*, a very good record of all that an inquiring mind could find to interest him in an Oxfordshire village. This storm took place on August 9, 1843, and the most remarkable feature of it was the precipitation of hail in such huge stones that it broke all windows, destroyed the crops, and killed many hares, as well as rooks, pheasants, and partridges. Mr. Jordan gives an interesting account of the structure of these stones (p. 405). He says that he weighed eight together, and found them to weigh exactly one pound, or two ounces each: and that on being melted they produced more than three quarters of a pint of water.

His account of the approach of the storm, carrying the hail with it, is the most remarkable part of his story. I have been out in many alarming storms, and in one in particular on the coast of Asia Minor, when the hail covered the deck of our ship so completely that a photograph I have of it suggests the Arctic regions: but I have never seen or heard anything resembling Mr. Jordan's account.¹ The storm was approaching Enstone

¹ There was a letter describing just such a storm in the Pyrenees in *The Times* one day during the late summer of 1911, but I unluckily omitted to make extracts from it.

from the direction of Kingham, in the teeth of an easterly wind :

‘ My attention was arrested by an extraordinary and awful sound in the air, such as I do not remember ever to have heard before. It resembled in some degree the roar of the ocean, or the noise of an ascending bore in a river : at last I saw, at a considerable height in the air, long descending streams, dancing as it were, or rising and falling in lines of what seemed to be thick rain or hail. I now thought it time to close the window at which I was sitting, and to see that all others in the house were also shut, and this was only just accomplished when the rain and hail were upon us, in the most furious form I ever beheld. At first indeed the hail was only of an ordinary size, but soon some stones as large as pigeon’s eggs began to fall, to strike the ground with great force, and to bound up again to the height of four or five feet. These were succeeded by great balls, of the average weight of two ounces, which burst in at the north windows of the house, leaping and bounding about in all directions. This continued about a quarter of an hour, when the fury of the storm abated.’

But this was only the beginning of a violent storm of thunder and lightning, which continued for the rest of the day.

Mr. Jordan adds that the roar of the hail was the most awful part of the storm, and suggests that it was caused by the rapid rotation of the hailstones in the course of their formation and fall. Was it not also caused, in part at least, by the collision of these huge stones with each other ?

This storm did no hurt to human beings at Enstone, nor did ours at Kingham in 1910: it is strange how seldom we hear of deaths from lightning. I knew an old shepherd of Churchill, now dead, who always wore large round glasses, and I once asked him how he came by them. He said that he had been blinded by a lightning flash when taking refuge under a tree. 'They took me to Birmingham hospital,' he added, '*and there they skinned my eyes for me.*' I told this story to Edward Nettleship the oculist, when we were fishing in Wales together: and he explained the old man's treatment, but the explanation has faded from my memory.

CHAPTER IX

THE GREAT DROUGHT OF 1911

August 15. I have just returned from a walk up the hill to White Quar; the first walk in that direction for many a long hot day. It has been simply impossible to mount that hill, the sun baking one's whole system, without getting dangerously hot.

May was a fine dry month, and then we naturally expected a wet June. But June was fine and dry till Coronation week, when for a few days it turned very cold and damp. Since then it has been almost uniformly hot and dry; twice we have had a momentary soaking, but in each case the clouds soon dispersed and left us hotter than ever. Some days have been close and oppressive, but not enough so to suggest thunder, of which we had so much a year ago, when no great degree of heat was ever reached. Most of our hot days have been days of clear air, strong sunshine, and what I may call a continental sensation of heat. Again and again my thermometer has reached 80 in a cool shady corner, and last Wednesday, the 9th, it came very close to 90. On that day it was 97 in London, 92 in Oxford. The house is now fairly baked, and to be cool is impossible in it, though we shut out the sun all the morning from our front rooms, keeping windows closed as well as blinds

drawn. The lawn is a sad sight, and to cross it in the noonday sun is like a taste of travel in the Sahara. All delicate annual plants are dead already, including my *Geranium lucidum* and *G. rotundifolium*; whether the seed they must have dropped will germinate remains to be seen. The apples are falling on the lawn, loosened by the strong south-easterly siroccos we have been tormented with. The hand of autumn is on us; the mountain-ashes have borne a glorious crop of berries, and the missel-thrushes, filled with the spirit of autumn, and unable to find worms in the parched fields, have devoured or dropped at least half of them. In a day or two they will all have vanished, and the trees will have to get ready for winter. My one birch-tree is entering on the sere and yellow leaf, and is doing all it can to look dismal for once in its life; but a birch can never be anything but beautiful, summer or winter.

From our windows we look out on an autumn scene. It seems but a few days ago since the field immediately in front of us was full of ripe wheat, of that wonderful apricot colour that invites the ruthless farmer to cut it; for a very few days the sheaves stood there in the sun, and now they are all piled on the rick yonder, and the stubble is already half ploughed over by the industrious family of the Bricks. The harvesting of this crop was all over in the first day or two of August.

As we look beyond this field to the south-east, we see the Yantell still fairly green stretching from the mill-stream to the watery ditch which now represents

the original course of the brook. The reason why the Yantell is green is simply that its hay is always late in making, and thus there has been a good shelter for the undergrowth; here, too, even in this dry summer, there has occasionally been a slight film of dewy mist in the morning. The Yantell hay is not famous for its excellence, but this year it was a treat to watch it made and carried, and now it forms the most magnificent rick, in the back yard of the Manor farm, that I ever remember seeing.

Beyond the Yantell, just at its further boundary, there is an oak that is already quite brown as we see it from the window; when we reach it we find the leaves all spotted with brown, though not one is brown all over. I have just been to examine this tree; it grows on the very edge of the ditch, which is even now pretty full of water, so the burning of the leaves cannot be due to lack of moisture. The leaves are burnt, not at the base or in the centre, but at the margins in large patches; along the midrib and some of the veins are many little galls, but I could not see that they had any relation to the mischief, as was suggested a few days ago by some one in a letter to *The Times*. Other oaks seem to be in much the same condition, whether on low or high ground; but there is a young one in the hedge just below our house which does not seem to have suffered at all. The only conclusion I can come to at present is that mature oaks are liable to get blasted by scorching sun and hot wind—a combination of which we have had our fill.

Further examination seems to confirm this conclusion. Well-sheltered oaks are still fairly green, e.g. in Daylesford Park, which slopes towards west and south, or in Churchill Heath wood ; but those which stand exposed to the east wind as well as the sun, especially where they are isolated, have suffered much more severely, and I think that in these cases the easterly side of the tree is browner than the others.

One naturally asks why oaks alone should have been thus victimized, while all other trees have escaped. Perhaps the innumerable galls have helped to make the trees susceptible, and perhaps, too, the astonishing crop of acorns, which must strike every one this year, has weakened the vitality of their other organs.¹ But the fact remains that where the trees have been comparatively out of reach of sun and wind, there the damage has not taken place to any considerable extent, in spite of any susceptibility occasioned by over-abundant galls and acorns. The study of oak-galls, I may add here, and indeed, of all galls, is evidently an extremely interesting one, mainly owing to the fact that many species of gall-flies alternate in wingless and winged, parthenogetic and two-sexed generations, as is described in a book published by the Clarendon Press (*Alternating Generations, a biological study of Oak Galls and Gall Flies*, by

¹ In 1912 neither galls nor acorns were anything like so abundant as in 1911, and the oaks remained green and wholesome throughout the summer, but the remarkable absence alike of sun and of east wind may account for this.

H. Adler, translated by Charles R. Stratton). But Dr. Hess, the author of the book on Forestry quoted in the last chapter, does not consider that any serious damage is done by the gall-flies to full-grown oaks.

But to return from this digression to the Yantell. The ditch by which stands the oak I just now mentioned, is almost dry, which seems to make the birds inhabiting it more obvious to the eye. A moorhen chick here showed itself a day or two ago to my dog, who promptly took it in his mouth and brought it to me unhurt; he is marvellously gentle with that mouth of his, except when attacked by an enemy. I put the little thing down on the water weeds, and it went off quite happily. To-day the dog dashed into the water after something that turned out to be a water-rail, which skulked quickly along the edge and vanished in some reeds. The bird is not common here, but I have seen it before in this very place.

The Yantell is better now to cross than most fields, for there is more moisture at the roots of the grass; so, too, with the Evenlode meadows, which from the hill look like a ribbon of green running between expanses of yellow and brown. But all the fields are hard to the foot, and split in great crevasses, which often follow the course of a mole run. Sloping grass fields are slippery, and need some caution. Worst of all are the stubble fields, one of which is enough to tire my feet with its hard lumpiness. So this morning I took the *road* to the north, facing a breeze which became more and more

delightful as the road rose to it, banishing all recollection of the painful sirocco of yesterday. To be able to walk once more, and to enjoy walking, was a privilege for which I was grateful.

But the hedgerows, a few weeks ago so full of butterflies and bees and the flowers that fed them, were forlorn and dusty. That melancholy plant the *Bartsia* seems to flourish even under such conditions—but it is one of those few that give me no pleasure. I always associate it with summer heat and dust. The beautiful silverleaf should be adorning the roadside grass, and its bloom is to be seen here and there, but, like everything else, it needs a shower. The spear-thistles (*Carduus lanceolatus*) that all the way up the hill should be in full bloom just now, are run to seed and sickly. This thistle is one of our finest wild plants, beautiful in growth and leaf and bloom; I have counted more than sixty blooms on one plant; the loss of it just now is irreparable.

Looking down from these heights over the valley to the Cotswolds, I can hardly see a field in which any sheaves are standing. The country has a monotonous aspect, for the ploughing has not yet been begun on most of the farms. These fields are, in fact, not only looking (as one of my neighbours expressed it) middle-aged, but are fast approaching their dotage.

The breeze is so pleasant that I mount in the face of it to the very top of the hill—Boulder Point, as old Colonel Barrow used to call it, for here are the obvious remains of an ancient cromlech. Close by is a small

quarry, sheltered to some extent by pines, and here I expected to find some relics of the summer. But no, all was brown and withered; the beautiful nodding thistles were hardly recognizable. Nor was there a butterfly to be seen.

I went on behind the pine-wood to White Quar, which looked very much as it does on a fine day in December, except that, if possible, there are fewer plants in bloom now. Only the carline thistles were happy, wide open and promising yet another spell of hot weather. In August and even in September and October this quarry should be brilliant with ragwort, but to-day all the bloom is gone, and what the caterpillars are doing I know not; I do not see them. The only thing of interest in plant-life is a bunch of sweet marjoram, and that has hardly any flowers left. It is growing among long dry grass, which perhaps has helped it to a little shelter from the blazing sun. Feeding on the seeds of the wild parsnip I see a single young Willow-wren, and a few linnets are about here and there; the birds are recovering from the moult, and are not as yet in difficulties for food. They vary their diet to some extent, owing to the hardness of the ground and the comparative scarcity of worms and juicy grubs. The warblers are more busy with seeds than usual, and the thrushes have long been using every suitable stone in my garden as a slaughter-house for snails. Rooks are looking forward to the ploughing, but at present they can glean in the corn-fields.

White Quar is too sad a scene to detain me. There is nothing for it but to descend the slippery grass fields to the Daylesford road. Every sheep-track is worn so smooth that if it were steep enough one might take a glissade here ; and below, where the sheep have not been, the grass is so long and brown that it takes all the heart out of me.

What will happen when the rain comes at last ? If it comes with glimpses of sunshine, shall we yet have another spring ? Shall I see the dog violets, as one year I did, making the ground blue in Bruern Wood ? Will the seeds that have been dropped during the drought germinate, or even come into bloom, this autumn ? I shall wait a while, and add a word to this paper, should I have anything to record.

September 3. The drought may be said to have come to an end towards the close of August, but the amount of rain has been very small, and now once more we have hot sun and bright air. The fields became fairly green again, chiefly owing to the germination of clover-seed, almost in a single night. My wild geraniums have also seeded themselves. Many flowering plants are in bloom again, e.g. St. John's wort, ragwort, and willow-herb here and there. But White Quar is still looking 'sadly', as they say here, and the ground thistle is the only one in bloom. To make up, we have early crops of berries in the hedges, and the effect of the red haws among bright green leaves in the sunshine is what I never saw, or noticed, before ; as a rule the hedges have begun to

lose the freshness of their green when the berries have gained their colour.

September 18. The drought set in once more on the 3rd, and continued with great heat till the 13th, a day of refreshing rain, but for me a very sad one. Now it has returned again, with cold wind from north and east. But the rain seems to have been enough to awake some more plants into autumn bloom. During the last two days I have noticed the following: strawberry, yellow bedstraw, teasel, poppy in bud, spear and marsh thistles, and all three kinds of willow-herb. All these were on the railway banks, or near the line, and all were undersized modest-looking plants; they seemed half ashamed of themselves for thus indulging in an autumn session. There is a wonderful show of at least three species of hawkweed, and one, *Leontodon autumnale*, is making some low-lying meadows as yellow as the buttercups do in May. But the railway is far the gayest scene, and its gaiety is increased by an astonishing abundance of the small copper butterfly,¹ which is quite the insect of the hour. These are now pairing, and I have several times noticed the male (as I imagine it is) on the ground in front of the female and quivering his tail continually.

October 4. This wonderful season seems really to be over at last, for it has been for some days very cold with early frost and north-west wind. I have, however, been able to add some more plants to my list of autumn

¹ It was still abundant on October 1, a cold, sunny day.

blooms, and I think they are worth recording. The blue geranium has been in bloom in many places, and also a St. John's wort (*H. quadratum*). I have found one sprig of honeysuckle in a hedge, one bloom of the yellow Geum, and one of the marsh marigold. On September 21 white violets began to appear on the bank in Hay Lane, and we found dog-violets here and there, though not in such plenty as I expected after a drought. Basil thyme continues to bloom in White Quar, and the marsh valerian here and there in the osier-beds.

Autumn bloom is 'an awakening of nature at the end of the summer drought' (Kerner), which suspends the vitality of the plants like winter frosts. It is effected in some plants by the premature forcing of buds destined for next spring; but this will not prevent them from blooming again when their season comes. In the same way, I imagine, the autumn song of birds is the result of a stimulus given to the vocal organs, and perhaps to the sexual organs, too, by a period of genial warmth and damp, after exhaustion caused by dry heat and the discomforts of the moult.

CHAPTER X

TWO GREAT SNOWSTORMS

WE had two or three severe winters in the early eighties: winters that were positively dangerous to animal life, and especially so for the birds. I think it was in the winter of 1884-5 that the fieldfares, and to some extent the redwings, suffered most severely; they became so weak that, shy as they are in general, they could hardly struggle out of reach of your hand. I remember catching one, and putting him in my pocket to take home to revive; but while he was still there his life slipped away. In April 1885 I went down to Lulworth in Dorset with a friend, and on April 13 I noted in my diary that I was quite amazed at the great numbers of dead fieldfares lying all about, killed by the late severe weather. It was clear that they had gone south and further south, till they were stopped by the sea, and then they drooped and died for want of food: all the berries were eaten, and the fields were hard as steel. It was these melancholy incidents that suggested to me the story about the fieldfares in my *Tales of the Birds*, which were all written soon afterwards, in 1887.

But these winters never quite reached at any point such a pitch of wintriness as we had already experienced in January 1881. The 18th of that month was a day

never to be forgotten by the people of southern and midland England, and more especially by the schoolboys of that day who were travelling to school, or who had been ordered by telegraph to stay at home instead. Anxious parents and schoolmasters divined that morning that something unusual was in the air; the Bursar of Marlborough College, my old school under the bleak Wiltshire Downs, sent out five hundred telegrams to stop the boys, and swept the butchers' shops clear of legs of mutton. He told me himself when I next met him, that one man who was caught in the storm on the downs that day was found the next morning walking round in circles, out of his mind. Many were the adventures recorded; but I know none more thrilling than the fate of my friend H. A. Evans, who was going to Westward Ho! in charge of a small boy destined for the school there. At the back of Exmoor the train was snowed up, and for three days and three nights the passengers had to take shelter at a roadside inn till an engine could work up from Barnstaple to rescue them. Evans had some sixpenny copies of plays of Shakespeare with him, which he cut into portions for his fellow-prisoners to read.

The night before the 18th I spent at Kingham, and had planned to go into Oxford next day for a few hours to do some work. It was blowing hard from the north-east, and there had been snow in the night, but there was not enough to make me change my mind; I was still young enough to enjoy wintry weather. I took

with me a few sandwiches, and a little whisky in a flask in case of accidents ; I suppose I had a great-coat of some kind, but I had (and have) such a dislike to great-coats, that it was certainly a very light one. In the train I met the Rector of Chadlington and his daughters, who were going to London ; and I remember that as we drew near Oxford he suddenly said, ‘ Is that drifting snow, or is it a blizzard ? ’ I looked to the east, and saw a cloud of powdery snow approaching the train ; at the moment I thought it was only drift, but it continued and increased, and we began to divine that we were going to have an unusual experience.

However, I was intent on my work—what it was I have quite forgotten—and as I was to return by the train at a quarter to four or so, I had no misgivings that I can remember. I was sitting in my room in college with a rug over my knees, when my old friend and school-master, F. E. Thompson, dropped in on me, and we had some pleasant talk. Neither of us, so far as I can remember, was anxious about the chances of railway travel, but at that time, though the blizzard was declaring itself rapidly, it had not shown us what it could do in the way of drifts. When I made my way down to the station as it was growing dusk, I was hardly prepared to find that my train had been snowed up at Radley, and was not expected in Oxford that night. Dean Liddell and Professor Bywater were among the victims : but I think they succeeded in getting some help from Radley College.

The porters at Oxford assured me that the slow train, rather late, would be sent on, and that no fatal snow-drift had been reported towards Chipping Norton Junction. I therefore determined to take my chance: for if I went back to college I should find nothing to eat and no bed ready aired for me. The desire to be at home in such weather was strong in me, though I certainly had some doubt about getting there. I was not alone, luckily, in my second-class carriage: I could have done with a whole carriage-full packed like sardines for warmth: for the cold was intense, and the snow-powder was getting in between the joints of the window-frames. Slowly, slowly, we made our way over the waste of snow, stopping at every station, and almost stopping at many another place, where the snow came pouring over the eastern side of some cutting; and the soft velvety feeling of our progress was such as I have never experienced since. What might be my fate at any moment I knew not, so long as we were at any distance from a station, and the most trying part was the long stretch of seven miles between Handborough and Charlbury. When at last we reached Charlbury station I felt great relief, and was half inclined to get out; but again the longing for home got the better of me, and I did not relish the prospect of being snowed up in the inn at Charlbury. To cut short the story of this interminable journey, as it seemed, we ran safely into harbour at our own station somewhere about half-past five.

So far so good : but my troubles were not yet over. No sooner had I issued out into the road that in less than a mile of easy walking should have brought me to my own door, than I felt it impossible to go forward. I have never had this sensation since then, but I can feel it even now ; the north-east wind was in furious blast, straight upon my face, down the road, and had blown down the large strong sign of the Langston Arms Hotel, which had then been lately built close to the station. I pressed on, but only for a few steps : I became aware that I should lose my eyesight with the mad fury of the wind and the millions of particles of stinging snow. My eyes had been sore and tender lately, and I dared not risk them : my ears too, might be endangered, for they had long been amiss. So I turned and sought the shelter of the inn.

I was shown into a room with a tolerable fire, and some tea soon revived me. But that comfort soon passed away, and I began again to feel the cold air breathing on me from every corner of the room, as I sat before the fire. I thought I would make another effort, paid my bill, and sallied out again : but in two minutes I was back there again, fairly beaten by the elements. There was nothing to do but to wait and hope for a lull, and I settled down again before the fire with such books as the hotel could produce. Two of them I remember well : Jules Verne's *From the Earth to the Moon*, which I read with avidity and delight, wishing indeed, that the bottle of *Nuits* were mine, with which they

regaled themselves in the 'projectile': and (2) a handbook of medicine for the family. When Jules Verne was exhausted, this other book struck in as a good second fiddle, for I became gradually convinced that I had all the diseases about which it told me, as I had been convinced by Warren's *Diary of a late Physician* at the tender age of eleven, that I was in an advanced stage of consumption, when I read that one of its surest symptoms is a voracious appetite in the patient. From these gruesome studies I was aroused by a sense of emptiness, and rang for some supper, at the same time asking to see a bedroom where I might sleep. The supper I enjoyed, but the bedroom in the newly-built house smelt so chilly and draughty, that I decided to try that short mile home once more—if I could get any one to try it with me. By this time it was known in the station that I was imprisoned in the hotel, and I presently received a message from the goods foreman that he and another man were going up to Kingham, and would take me in tow, and at the same time the landlord assured me that the storm was slightly abated.

At about ten o'clock the two men called for me. To protect my eyes from the wind, while we had to face it, I tied my handkerchief over them, and took the foreman's arm: the other man carried the lantern. As the wind was a little less furious than it had been, we managed very well till we came to the cross-roads, i.e. about a third of our way: the snow was not very deep here, as the wind sweeping in the same direction

as the road had blown it down into the valley. But when we came to the sharp turn to the left, where the sign-post is now, we found the snow drifted on the road up to the tops of the hedges, and were forced to get into the field on the leeward side. In this way we struggled along till we came to the railway bridge over the Chipping Norton line, and once over that—no easy task, for we had to get back into the road and the drifts—we thought we had laid the worst behind us. But down in the flat meadows and the road across them, there was an even depth of soft snow, into which we had to plunge up to our knees, and sometimes deeper. It was here, as I have told in another chapter about our old village folks, that I felt that desire, of which I had often read, to lie down in the snow and go to sleep, and with it the conviction that one more effort must be made and all would be well. At last, though it took a long time, we were across the meadow and the brook, and mounting the hill to 'the Hopper', in better shelter from the merciless wind. Here Tom Phipps, unknown to us, had turned in to warm himself, and paid the penalty with frostbite. I now remember no more, till we stood at the door of my newly-built house, trying to rouse my housekeeper, Mrs. Toon, who had given me up and gone to bed. At last she came, and I bade adieu to my kind and helpful companions.¹ The last

¹ The foreman, George Grafton, one of the best men I ever knew, remained a friend of mine till his sad death while engaged in shunting at the station not very long after the storm.

words I said to them (so Mrs. Toon reminds me), were that I did not need any longer to hold my hat on as I had been doing—for it was frozen fast to my head !

I found that Mrs. Toon and her boys had been working hard to keep the snow out of the house : the wind had somehow lifted a ventilator or trap-door and the snow had been pouring down the stairs ; there was also a drift of it all the way from the front door to the back. But after a good warming by the kitchen fire I went to bed and slept well, and the next morning I felt none the worse. I explored as far as the railway, and found that no train had been snowed up about here ; but we were cut off from all communication with London for a day or two, and if a thaw had not set in we might have had difficulties about provisions. I got safely to my work at Oxford on the 21st, where I found a drift of snow at the top of the Parks, through which a path had been cut between walls much higher than my head.

Only once since then have I witnessed a really bad snowstorm, and that was one in which the flakes were large, and the sensation was not that of the true blizzard of powdery stinging particles. On the other hand it lasted for almost double the time of the other—for twenty-two hours of incessant snow-whirl. This was the famous storm of April 25, 1908, when the kingcups were out in the meadows and the chiffchaffs hugging the sheltered sides of woods. It had been very cold all the month ; even at Avignon, where I spent the early part of April, it was never comfortably warm.

I returned home on the 15th, and found a strong cold north-east wind blowing, which continued for several days. I find by my diary that on the 19th, Easter Sunday, I picked kingcups while snow was falling. On the 21st I found snipe and a great number of field-fares. On the 23rd we had east wind and sleet and a great snowstorm in the evening. On the 24th my thermometer stood at 28 at 8.30 a.m. : as it was bright and bracing I walked to Sarsden to look for sweet violets, and found them under the snow. Descending quickly to Churchill Heath Wood, to get warm after stopping to talk to Lord Moreton, I found on the sunny side of it more chiffchaffs than I have ever seen together, with a few willow-wrens. Then I went to Oxford, meaning to return next day, Saturday.

That morning the sky darkened and turned dirty yellow, and by midday we were in the middle of a furious whirl of snowflakes, which seemed to be driven round and round the college quad by some demon of winter who should have gone to sleep long ago. After a time I went down to Christchurch Meadow to see how it looked there, and can only describe it as a northern Inferno. One could see nothing but a vast witches' cauldron of yellowish brown snow-cloud; and thinking that I might this time be less lucky than in 1881, I wired to my sister that I should stay in Oxford. The next morning it was thawing, and Oxford was in such a horrible state of slush that I took a Sunday train to Kingham, where, at 6 p.m., I found the snow nearly

vanished, the road fairly dry, and the green fields pleasant to the eye. This strange elemental disturbance had passed over England from north to south in a narrow ribbon of snow, which happened to take Oxford in and left Kingham all but out. Before that week was over we jumped to a most unexpected excess of heat. On Mayday my thermometer reached 76 in a cool shady corner at 2.30 p.m., and the next day was almost tropically hot, and was followed by a thunderstorm.

CHAPTER XI

THE BATTLE OF KINGHAM

SEPTEMBER 15, 1909

September 15, 1911. Two years ago to-day I was awakened at seven o'clock by a sharp rattling fire of musketry. I had known for a day or two that war was in the air around us, but I had forgotten all about it when I went to bed, and was much taken aback at waking to find the usual peace of our Georgics disturbed by 'horrentia Martis arma'. I jumped up and looked out of the window, but the autumn mist veiled all objects: and the firing seemed gradually to pass away through the village and up in the direction of Daylesford.

This was not only an exciting day for the whole neighbourhood, but a delightful one for me, who have always been peacefully fond of warlike operations. Even before I went to school I used to read *The Great Battles of the British Army* with profound interest, and Alison's *History of Europe*, in which there was a fair account of the campaigns of Napoleon and Wellington. Since then many wars—far too many—have disgraced Europe, in all of which I have taken the deepest interest, following the strategy and trying to understand the tactics, abstracting my mind wholly from

all the accompanying misery. And now it was a welcome surprise to find the semblance of war all around me at Kingham, of all places in the world, without a hint of anything worse than fatigue, hunger, or discomfort. My great object was to find out what was going on—what were the objects proposed to themselves by the two commanders, and what steps they were taking to secure them. Like every one, however, who has been in a battle without being in the secrets of the staff, I soon became fairly bewildered, and it was only the next day that I gained any real notion of these manœuvres with the help of the *Daily Chronicle*, which was giving far better accounts than our *Times*.

In commemorating the events of this memorable day, I will follow the order of my own experience; I will tell exactly what I saw, and then explain it by the knowledge I afterwards picked up of the objects of the operations. Luckily these manœuvres were only preliminary to the big ones in the Vale of White Horse, which followed directly afterwards, and there was no crowding or excitement to distract our minds from the business.

It was on the Wednesday morning that I was awakened by the firing. On the Sunday I had gone to see a picturesque encampment of the Irish Guards in Adlestrop Park: but I knew neither why they were there nor to what force they belonged. On the Monday I saw a single warrior on a cycle, passing through the village: operations had not yet begun. On Tuesday evening,

however, the station was occupied by a force which belonged, as I found, to the ' Browns ', or defenders of our liberties, and at the same time the appearance of a balloon hanging over Icomb suggested that these men were being watched. It was a pleasant diversion to see them bivouacking by the side of the road and in Farmer Rose's field, and watering the horses at the brook by the mill.

It soon became pretty plain that an enemy was advancing on us from the direction of Gloucester, and so much, indeed, I was able to make out from the *Times*. I also discovered that the Browns, our friends, were under the command of General Stephenson, and the Whites, our enemies, under that of General Grierson: but these heroes were only names to me. I feel, however, a certain interest in them, for neither is likely to forget Kingham, and Kingham will certainly remember them. I concluded that Grierson, having established himself on the hills near Stow, had made an attack in the early morning on our force at the station—an important point, of course—and that the firing I heard meant that this attack had failed, and that our men were driving the enemy back through the village towards Daylesford. So far I believe I was right, but I never could get this view confirmed by military authority.

Of course I dressed and went up to the Green, in hopes of making something out in the mist. There I found reinforcements arriving from the direction of Chipping Norton—artillery, with the Scots Guards: and the

enemy retreating towards Daylesford, in which direction I heard shooting. I returned to breakfast, and soon afterwards, hearing that our troops were making for a ford in the Evenlode above the village, I went in that direction, and found a regiment of Lancers in a field just beyond the railway, with the brook between them and Bledington Heath. This ford seems to have occasioned a good deal of perplexity.¹ Personally I never heard of it before : yet I suppose it was not an imaginary one, created for the occasion by military authority, for later in the day I was asked the way to it by an officer in charge of commissariat wagons. I made the best shot at it I could think of, but I fancy he thought me rather a fool. The fact is that there are two or three places where, with some trouble, you might get such wagons across the brook : but then you must know the brook to begin with. If all this ground had been well reconnoitred beforehand, I doubt if either cavalry or commissariat would have been sent this way. As a matter of fact, the Lancers gave it up, and went on along the level fields towards Daylesford, as also did the artillery, driving an invisible enemy before them.

But I soon found that infantry also were trying to get across the valley and the brook. As I walked along the line, the men crossed it in front of me in considerable numbers, and took shelter under the edge of the cutting—for big guns were supposed to be pelting them from the

¹ I find it marked on an old map as being exactly where the footbridge crosses the stream into Bledington Ashes.

Cotswolds. Now and then a rush would be made down to the brook, where they could get across by the footbridge, and then the men disappeared in the woods. I afterwards found, when tracking them out after peace had been restored, that they had plunged into the miry depths of the old green road between Bledington and Oddington, and had been misled by it. They should have merely crossed it, and then got into the fields—so, at least, they should have done had they been ordinary mortals; but being soldiers with an enemy in front of them, I suppose that they had to stick as long as they could to the cover of the woods. However this may be, the attack of which they formed a part must have been developed late, in part, at least, in consequence of this: and, as we shall presently see, this had an important bearing on the fortunes of the day.

I now left the line and took up a position on the bridge over it leading to Bledington Heath. I was still very much in the dark as to what was going on, and I tried to extract some information from a sergeant of the Scots Guards. He was a pleasant fellow, and we had some talk about Edinburgh, to which I was shortly to go for some weeks; but he knew no more about the campaign than I did. At last, however, a ray of light was thrown on the situation. An officer came up, armed with a map, and asked where Maugersbury Hill was. Here was a pretty mess! Neither I nor Farmer Hamblett, who was standing by me, had ever heard of such a place. But it was not that we of Kingham were

stupid: the truth is that the army had been supplied with maps in which the names do not exactly correspond with those in common use about us. Mangersbury village is just under Stow, and on a spur or flank of Stow Hill: so I naturally imagined that this spur or flank was what the officer wanted. I hope my remarks did not mislead the poor man and delay again the development of the attack: for it afterwards turned out that what they wanted was really the hill above Icomb, on which stands Icomb round tower,¹ familiar to me in days of Colonel Barrow, who at one time rented it for four pounds per annum. I believe the parish of Mangersbury, by some freak, includes this hill, and that it is known to a few correctly informed persons as Mangersbury Hill.

After this, as nothing particular seemed to be going to happen, I returned home, watching a battery of artillery blazing away in the fields of the Manor Farm, among the corn-sheaves, while other big guns were booming from the hill near Churchill. I had lunch and then took up a book and dropped asleep over it, for I had been out all the morning, and the air, though pleasant, was soft and sleepy. When I awoke, the face of things had entirely changed. The village was in the hands of the enemy.

¹ This tower, which also usually serves as a cottage, used to be known as Guy's Tower, and was believed to have been built by a gentleman of that name at the time when Napoleon was planning the invasion of England, in order to give him an early opportunity of spying out the approach of the French. The view is a very fine one, except to the south.

How this happened I will explain directly. We were indebted to it for an exciting afternoon, and for an evening which none of our people will ever forget. For more than two hours a lively fight went on between our captors, who lined the walls and hedges at this end of the village, and our own troops, who were taking cover also behind walls and hedges on the other side of the valley towards Churchill Heath and the station. A battery of artillery was in the close behind the church, pounding away at their enemy—our friends: and these guns were presently moved into the field immediately in front of our windows, so that their discharges almost shook the house. I do not think it was very bloody work; I did not see how they could expect to kill any one, but I suppose that shells at that short distance should have checked any attempt at counter attack. Maxim guns were also rattling away, and at times the din was great. Then suddenly, down came the Worcester regiment upon us, through the village at the double, and down the Bledington footpath to the railway, where they got upon the high embankment of the Great Central loop line, thus effectually preventing any flanking movement up the valley. Meanwhile attempts were being made to get across the Yantell and take advantage of the cover afforded by the Chipping Norton line; but these did not seem very successful.

After a time I ventured down the road, between the two forces, and found that the Gordon Highlanders were clinging hard to walls and hedges here; evidently

the position of our friends was rather desperate until reinforcements could arrive. These, I found, were coming up from the direction of Lynham and Shipton. Meanwhile another fight had evidently been going on somewhere near Icomb, to judge by the booming of guns in that direction.

After sating my curiosity I strolled homewards, meeting the Duke of Connaught on the way, and I believe also Sir John French, whom I did not recognize, and soon after this hostilities ceased. Now it appeared that the commissariat had been much at fault, and that the men were desperately hungry, and we had to do all we could to satisfy them. Luckily we had a good crop of apples that year, and I gave all the purple 'lady-fingers' we could spare to some jolly youngsters of the East York and the Worcester regiments, who were so desperately empty that they scrambled and fought (all in good humour) for the fruit like schoolboys. Lastly came the bivouac in the close by the church, which can hardly, even in the Civil War, have seen such a sight before. The evening was getting drizzly and damp, and as the fires were gradually kindled for cooking the scene became extraordinarily picturesque. Khaki-clad figures moved about in all directions in the deepening darkness and thickening mist, picketing horses, fetching water, keeping fires alight, and cooking. Many straggled up the village in search of eatables, and every biscuit in the place, and every cigarette, too, was sold that night. Gradually the fires died down, and these good fellows, damp and

doubtless still hungry, lay down to sleep on the wet grass of the close.

The next morning it was so wet that further fighting was given up, in view of the great manœuvres just coming on beyond the hills. I had to go away by train, and had much difficulty in getting down to the station, for the road was encumbered with artillery and wagons. So ended the battle of Kingham, which decidedly woke us all up, especially the rising generation. For many weeks afterwards the boys went about in mimic warfare, and in some extemporized uniform, and I was pleased to find that they had picked up a very fair idea of the art of reconnoitring. They stalked the Bledington boys (so they told me) and succeeded in capturing a number of them. They were generous enough to let their prisoners go, perhaps because they had not the means of securing them, and because Bledington, as I have said already, has always been on good terms of fellowship with us. I wish these boys might have imitated the soldiers in more important matters. They set us all an excellent example of endurance, cheerfulness, and attention to duty, and not a complaint was heard of any one of them. A Bledington farmer told me soon afterwards that he was about all night among those who were encamped on his farm, getting water for them, and that he never heard a bad word that night. This is, no doubt, partly the result of an improvement all round in rural districts, but also of the good example set by their officers. The officers whom I saw that day

were gentlemen, and modest gentlemen, so far as I could guess. My soldier nephew tells me that the faults of Tommy are of a harmless kind in these days, serious only from a professional point of view; his mind is chiefly occupied with games, and it is difficult to get him to take a lively interest in his own work.

But I must now try and explain to myself and my reader (should there ever be such a person) the course of that day's operations, so far as they throw light on our brilliant little battle.

It seems that the task assigned to our commander, General Stephenson, was to cover Oxford, while keeping communication open with his main army, which was supposed to be at Leamington. Thus he must hold the valley of the Evenlode and the railway to Oxford, while keeping a sufficient force on his right wing to command the whole country between Evenlode and Cherwell from Kingham to Banbury. At the same time he would have to keep a weather-eye open for the approach of the enemy from the Severn valley and Gloucester. On the night before our battle he had infantry brigades at Boulter's Barn, Chipping Norton, Lyneham, and Chadlington, each brigade with three batteries of artillery. But during that day he had pushed on a flying force of cavalry to snap up Stow-on-the-Wold before the enemy reached it; and this was actually done. It was, however, useless, for the white cavalry, followed by the whole white force, made it impossible to hold the town, and our defenders were withdrawn into the valley. One result of this was

that our station was occupied by them, where they were attacked next morning, as we have seen, and drove the enemy back.

Meanwhile General Grierson, after capturing Stow, had seen the importance of Icomb Hill, or Maugersbury Hill, as they insisted on calling it, and had seized it and entrenched a brigade there, posting two others at Stow in readiness for further contingencies. His plan seems to have been to hold on to these hills with his right, while outflanking the Browns in the valley with the rest of his troops. General Stephenson's plan was much the same, as it happened ; he meant to hang on to the hills towards Chipping Norton, and so to keep up communication with his main army, while at the same time making a determined attack on the enemy's position at Icomb. Could he but gain this hill, the enemy's operations would be paralysed, Stow could hardly be safely retained, and any troops sent round to outflank us would be in a perilous position.

This attack on Icomb Hill was what was being developed all the morning while I was watching the troops along the railway and in Bledington Heath. It actually took place after I got home, and while I was lunching and resting. It seems that it was a determined attack, and very nearly succeeded, but the position was too strong. The hill is steep, the approaches to it long, and towards the upper part almost without cover. The umpires could not allow that it was taken, and their verdict practically decided the day against our friends

the Browns. For General Grierson, whose task, as I think, was decidedly the easier of the two, seeing that he was quite secure on that hill, began to swing his left, consisting of two brigades, round by Daylesford and the Homes, forced the defenders out of Kingham, and then sent a third brigade round the flank of the others, to envelop our forces from Churchill. I used to amuse myself for some days afterwards by tracking out these movements; wherever the troops had been, there the grass by the roadside was quite trodden down.

Had Icomb Hill been taken, all this would, of course, have been impossible; and our general seems to have weakened his right, and to have abandoned Churchill for Kingham, with the idea of bringing an irresistible force against that hill and so winning the day. But the umpires would not let him have it, and the result was that it was he and not General Grierson, whose operations were paralysed as the day drew on. At nightfall, i. e. when the cease-firing had sounded, he was hurrying up reinforcements from Charlbury and Lyneham to meet the encircling movement of the enemy, and had been forced to abandon the offensive. What might have happened next day it is impossible to say; but if the troops had been allowed to remain exactly as they were that night, it seems likely that the enemy's object would have been effected, of pinning the Browns to the Evenlode valley and the neighbourhood of Oxford, and so preventing them from joining their main army in Warwickshire.

So ended the battle of Kingham, which should perhaps, more properly be named after Icomb, where it raged in the heat of the day, and where it was practically decided. But we shall always call it by the name of our own peaceful village; at the same time trusting that Kingham may never experience the real horrors of war, or see greater trials of human endurance than those of hungry soldiers, lying all night long on the wet grass of early autumn.¹

¹ The last real fighting in this bit of country (except a brief combat at Stow in 1645) was on September 3 and 4, 1643, when Chipping Norton, Cornwell, Adlestrop, and Oddington were successively occupied by the trainband regiments of Essex' army, on their way to raise the siege of Gloucester, then beleaguered by the king. The chief fighting was between Oddington and Stow, where Rupert awaited them with a large force of cavalry, which was, however, obliged to retreat. Interesting details of these movements are to be read in the collection of tracts entitled *Bibliotheca Gloucestrensis* (kindly lent me by Lord Moreton), pp. 238 sqq. and 276. (In the latter passage the name 'Enlard' is obviously meant for Evenlode.) Our peaceful combatants of 1910 little knew that there had been real war here but a few generations back.

CHAPTER XII

A FEW LAST WORDS

I HAVE written the foregoing chapters at leisure times in the course of years, merely as episodes in what has often been laborious work of a totally different kind. That, perhaps, is the reason why I have not in any of them addressed myself to serious questions of our rural civilization, such as are now occupying the minds of statesmen and economists. These questions have, indeed, been continually in my mind, especially when considering the results of the enclosure, or thinking over the ways and sayings of the old folks ; but I have shrunk from any attempt to answer them, simply because I cannot do so with confidence. It is by no means easy to get at the real thoughts and feelings of the villager, even on matters of everyday life, or to arrive at any sure conclusions about his best policy in the present and his probable future. Able townbred legislators, such as are almost all the members of the present Liberal ministry, will never learn, even from 'backstairs inquiries', either what is really best for the rural folk, or what they think is best for them, unless they take up their abode among them—and even then it will not be easy. Nor indeed is a clever Welshman from the mountains apt to learn how to legislate for us (supposing

we need to be legislated for, which is possibly an open question), whose ideas of rural England are chiefly derived from hasty excursions in a motor car.

Let me parenthetically give an instance of my own ignorance of the ideas of those among whom I have so long had a home. I knew well that the matrimonial relation, once entered into, is almost always faithfully kept, as I believe it is in rural life generally. What I did not know was that there is a positive opinion about it, and that this may find expression in peculiar ways. A husband and wife, recently married, had had differences; the wife believed, and with reason, that her husband was making away with the bit of money left her by her father, and she took advantage of his absence for a few days to desert the place, locking up the house, and sending all his belongings to the station to await his return. This desertion was more than the village, especially the women of it, could put up with. One evening soon after this I was entering the village from the station, and was surprised to find women, children, and youths lining the road, and making a most horrible din with old pots and pans. I was told that the offending wife had reappeared, and had taken refuge in a cottage hard by; to express their disapproval of her, the population had resorted to that curious process which is described under the name of 'Skimmington' in Mr. Hardy's *Mayor of Casterbridge*. This is the only record I have of any such proceeding here, but it was plain that the feeling and the traditional mode of

expressing it had remained fully alive in the minds of the people, unknown to the 'quality'.

In spite, however, of the reticence to which I feel prone, I will venture to write down a few thoughts about two questions of the day which concern country people very closely. One is that of small holdings, or peasant proprietorship; the other is education. Let it be clearly understood that I am writing of Kingham only, not generalizing from limited experience.

When the last Small Holdings Act came into operation I learnt with some astonishment, which was, however, only momentary, that no applications were made under it for land by any labourer or poor man in this comparatively enterprising and intelligent village. I knew that our labourers were comfortable; I knew also that the nature of our soil is not well suited for profitable cultivation in small holdings, like that of the vales of Evesham and Worcester not far away. When I came to think over the matter, I ceased to be surprised that intelligent men with regular wages should hesitate to embark on an attempt to support themselves and their families by working a small holding, from which they could hardly expect to put money in their pockets, as they now do every Saturday. Money has come to be essential to them, to maintain their households at the level demanded by respectable village society; and unless they could feel sure of a money profit from the new enterprise they naturally felt shy of undertaking it. So I reasoned myself, and I was probably not far wrong.

But within the last few days (October 1912) I have found another reason suggested, which was probably quite as cogent. I do not myself belong to that privileged class that is just now entitled to give secret evidence about the land, but my friend, the leading Liberal here, kindly allowed me to see the printed questions sent him, and the answers he was returning. Here I noticed that he accounted for the failure of our labourers to take advantage of the Act by stating their belief *that it would work them too hard*. My Liberal friend is likely to know the truth, for he is himself an employer of agricultural labour. If it be the truth, or part of the truth, do not let us on that account accuse them of laziness. They do steady work for many hours a day, but when it is done they still have some hours before them, and in these they like to read, smoke, and play games. They see how the small farmer works with his family, for we have him here as well as the big one. They know that his life is a continual grind and chronic anxiety, and that he and his sons have a worn and wearied look on them. Their own life is often a gay one compared with his—especially so is that of the craftsman, mason, blacksmith, and carpenter. Education has, in fact, taught our working folk here as in the towns, that life is worth living as well as wearing out. They have learnt to read and write, and incidentally to take interest in passing events, and they do not wish to rise in the morning full of care, and to drop into bed at night wearied out with the incessant work of the day. Such

a day, so they believe, and rightly so far as I know, is that of the small holder who cannot afford to employ the labour of others; and even on Sunday, it is to be noted, he is often at work while the waged man is at ease.

It is not only, however, education that has brought about this result; other tendencies of the time have operated in the same direction. The rise of wages, the cheapness of provisions, the almost complete abandonment of the drinking habit by our younger men, and the possession of ready money which is the result again of all these, have minimized discontent, and discourage any hankering after a change of life. I speak of course of Kingham only, for it does not do to generalize from a slender experience; villages differ greatly, not only in different districts, but even in the same neighbourhood. Here, for example, there is no lack of employment of various kinds, apart from that of agricultural labour proper; our two big landlords supply it in plenty, the one at his Homes, the other on his estate, and an engineer in the village, the railway a mile away, and the 'quality' who are attracted hither by good air, good hunting, and a convenient train-system, take both boys and girls into their service gladly. I have mentioned certain boys in previous chapters, who were in the school till a month or so ago; he of the Stonechats is learning gardening at the other end of the village, and the one who heard the cuckoo call in the storm has just found a good place in the carpenter's shop on Lord Ducie's estate. In such

employments the work is not exacting, nor unpleasant ; in due time the pay will be fairly good.

I cannot wonder at what a theorist would probably describe as sad want of enterprise among our people. I have lately been reading Mr. George Bourne's last book about his Surrey folk, and find there a short but most valuable chapter ('The Initial Defect') in which the drawbacks of the old peasant system are balanced against its advantages. The main defect was the cramping of the mental activity of the peasant. 'In cowstall or garden or cottage, or in the fields or on the heaths, the claim of the moment was all-absorbing ; and as he hurried to thatch his rick before the rain came, or to get his turfs home by nightfall, the ideas which thronged about his doings crowded out ideas of any other kind. . . . So the strong country life tyrannized over country brains, and, apart from the ideas suggested by that life, the peasant folk had few ideas. *Their minds lacked freedom* ; there was no escape from the actual environment into a world either of imagination or of more scientific understanding.' Such minds could not value education, and did not wish for it ; they did not value a vote, nor seek to obtain one. My old friend Johann Anderegg of Meiringen, was indeed much in the same case economically ; he had a bit of land and worked hard at other employments, tree-felling, timber-cutting, even slaughtering—to keep himself afloat, and was in debt to the last day of his life ; but he was saved from blank stupidity not only by natural gifts, but by the

reaction on him of an environment, social and physical, such as the peasantry of our flat stubborn English lands could not often enjoy. I am tempted to think that if such pessimists as the Hammonds or Mr. Masterman had lived in the days of the English yardlander, they would have eyed him with the same sad discontent with which they sigh over the British labourer; for if his material comforts were greater, he had no use for them beyond himself and his family; if his economic independence was enviable, his want of mental freedom was lamentable. Let us be cautious in trying too hastily to bring about an agrarian revolution. *If our economic system is to be changed, the new one must be nursed in some way that will save us from intellectual destitution.* This will not be done by undermining landlordism and replacing it by peasant proprietors—assuredly not in this corner of Oxfordshire; for that would be to abolish efficiency and intelligence, and to replace them by inefficiency and intellectual barrenness.

The second subject on which I should wish to express a humble opinion is education, which is very closely related to that of peasant holdings. On this subject I have perhaps some right to speak, for I have been a manager of our school for twenty years at least, and before that, while in residence at Oxford, I was for eight years corresponding manager of another village school, under circumstances which need not be here explained. I have held the same position in the management of this school since 1906, and have now at last lived to see our

children comfortably housed in a new and spacious building, instead of the old tithe barn which had served the purpose of a school ever since the days of the late rector's father, and which had in course of time become unsafe, draughty, and depressing alike to teachers and children. Our infant mistress, who remembers the school when she was a child in it herself, has just been telling me how much brighter and quicker the children are in the new premises, and I can see myself that this is perfectly true. My friend the medical inspector says the same thing. Though good buildings are by no means everything, they have more importance than at one time I used to think. The Board is quite right in its policy in this respect, and some day it will, I hope, be supported in this policy by managers and parents, who, at present, are rather disposed to think that money is wasted on good buildings. I wish they could see the spacious airiness of the Swiss schools, and the enthusiasm of each commune for the welfare of its own particular school; they would have much to learn there. I have heard Swiss peasants complain of local expenditure of various kinds, towards which they were obliged to contribute, but never about expenditure on education. Let it be remembered that the Education Committee of the County Council, and its Secretary, are able to negotiate with the Board in this matter of expenditure, and to supply the necessary local information as to the paying power of the parish; and in our case they have done this with great benefit to the ratepayers.

In order to get our new school with all its advantages,

we have had to give up our church school and become a provided or council school. For us at the present time, I believe this to be right as well as necessary; but it would not have been right, I think, in the old days of the board schools. A council school of to-day is a very different thing from a board school before 1903, for the managers now have hardly any real power, while the members of the school board had a good deal; and it is my firm conviction that in English rural parishes anything in the nature of 'popular control'—one of those phrases used by the politician without understanding its real meaning in the country—is now, and long will be, almost the worst possible device for securing efficiency. This, of course, is only because no one in a rural parish knows anything of education, except perhaps the parson, and in these days five out of six parsons will probably know little about it, or interest themselves only in the religious teaching. Formerly the parson, having a more direct control over the school, had also a more lively interest in it; and thus, in spite of a possible religious difficulty (here happily quite unknown), what I may call the One Man system of control had a real value, the results of which we feel here even now.

I mean that, as a rule, there was at least one person in the parish besides the teachers who took a lively interest in the school, who constantly visited it, who knew the children, and (what is almost as important) knew their parents. In the matter of discipline a sensible parson must have been invaluable, for parents would

submit to his decision when they would be up in arms against the schoolmaster. Children would be kept up to work at school, just as parents were kept up to their duty of sending them there. Above all, the parson can teach lessons of truthfulness and other virtues with far greater effect in the school than in the pulpit; and, if the complaint is well founded, that children are less truthful than they used to be, I suspect that it may be owing to the limitation of the parson's opportunities.

Whatever we may gain under the new system—and I am one of those who believe that in due time we shall gain much—it is as well to realize what we have lost, especially in country parishes. Few officially constituted teachers, few legally appointed managers, few Christian ministers, who only have access to the schools at stated times, will be able to do what the best kind of parson could do in days gone by. The reason is simply that none of these can ever have exactly his status in the school, his independence, his unquestioned moral and religious authority. That condition of things can never be reproduced in which a boy or girl looked to the clergyman as having a real power over him, perhaps a real affection for him. It happens that this morning I was buying a copy of *Cranford*; and I have just laid down my pen to remind myself of a scene in that immortal picture of an olden time, where the rector attends the conjurer's entertainment with *his* schoolboys around him. It is to the point, for Mrs. Gaskell was veracious and a Nonconformist, and I cannot forbear quoting it.

‘ I looked, and I saw the tall, thin, dusty Rector, sitting surrounded by National School boys, guarded by troops of his own sex from any approach of the many Cranford spinsters. His kind face was all agape with broad smiles, and the boys around him were in chinks of laughing. I told Miss Matty that the Church was smiling approval, which set her mind at ease.’¹

There were, of course, hundreds of parishes where the parson did not or could not use his opportunities. But in the majority of cases, even if he was wealthy or aristocratic, I am disposed to think that he was more really in touch with his flock than the ecclesiastically trained rector or vicar of to-day, and that where he did use his authority over the school, he used it more effectually. But in any case his reign is likely to be soon over, and what we must look for in its place is the real sympathetic interest of *one at least of a body of managers*—an interest in the children and their teachers, and in everything connected with the school. This is the real secret. No amount of machinery, no amount of popular control, will do what we want done, unless this lively interest can be awakened and secured. In plain language, some one on the spot must be always thinking of the children and their teachers. What an opening here for sensible and practical women, whom we may hope to see elected freely on boards of managers !

Our people do not lament the loss of the One Man system ; but I have found them apt to believe that the

¹ Another beautiful example of the same happy clerical control is in Trollope’s *Last Chronicle of Barset* ; Mr. Crawley is always to be found in ‘ his ’ school.

children were much better taught in the old days. They are disposed to despise 'fancy subjects' as waste of time, and wonder why the boys should learn gardening from a schoolmaster who presumably knows nothing about it, when they can pick it up so well from their fathers on the allotment grounds. So with the girls and their cooking. There may be a fraction of reason in these views, but where they are utterly wrong is in supposing that in these days the three R's are all that is necessary; that might have done well enough in the days of the yardlanders, but not now. They are wrong, too, in fancying that these elementary subjects are now badly taught, as many of them do or did till lately. I was informed two years ago by a manager just appointed by the parish council, that there was not a child in the school that could spell *the*. As he had never been inside the school since he grew up, I knew that this was only the talk of the village, mainly arising from prejudice against the head teacher; and I sent my friend a batch of letters written to me by the elder children, which were both well written and well spelt. I have heard no complaints of this kind since then.

There is also, I think, a certain amount of suspicion of all government and officialism—board, county council, inspectors of all kinds. This is not altogether to be wondered at; why, it may be argued with apparent reason—why all this fuss and expenditure when the results needed are so few and simple? Perhaps this feeling may be inherited from the old hard and fast days of inspection, when there was no Council to stand between

the school and the terrible Board of Education with its power of withdrawing the grant. H.M. Inspector came down once a year and turned the school inside out, and unless he were exceptionally amiable, frightened every one. The parson was alarmed about the grant, for his income, like that of the squire, began to fall in those years, and subscriptions to the school were hard to get ; in the last resort the debit balance of the school account would have to be paid out of his own pocket. The teachers were nervous, and a bullying inspector might reduce them to absolute misery. I can remember such a state of misery lasting a whole week, simply because a rheumatic inspector had begun by finding fault with the draughts, and as a natural consequence, with the teaching. The children of course were in terror, for each one of them had to be examined separately, as an individual earner of state money. A few days ago one who was a child in those days was describing to me the intense nervous tension that she and others endured that long and weary day, and the utter incapacity of some of them to produce the knowledge that was in them. She added, I must confess, that when the inspector's back was turned, some of the more audacious would relieve their feelings by mimicking that unconscious tyrant.

In my own opinion the present policy of the Board, both as regards subjects, methods, and inspection, is on the whole working in the right direction. The object seems to be, so to develop intelligence and interest as to enable the three R's, once acquired, to take care of

themselves ; and to keep the awakening process in close relation to country life and all its facts and objects, though not forgetting the claims of more far-reaching subjects. What Mr. Edmond Holmes calls the 'path of mechanical obedience' is to be abandoned, though he himself will not believe it.¹ School life cannot indeed in this country be made quite so ideally happy as he pictures it in his Utopian school, but it can be made a real delight to the children, or to the great majority of them. The brainless, or brain-destroying, order is passing away, and as far as methods can carry us we are beginning to do fairly well.

But it must never be forgotten that methods alone cannot generate the steam that is necessary for the really good working of a school. All depends on the teacher, and methods of training cannot make him perfect. Much too depends on the presence in the village of some one who will watch the school with real interest, and help the teachers through difficulties and troubles. At present it is not easy to find either the ideal teacher or the ideal manager ; but when I look back on the progress that we have undoubtedly made in the last thirty years, I cannot but believe that another thirty will bring us nearer our goal. We shall gain more freedom, and get rid of fads and fancies. Our schools

¹ I allude to Mr. Holmes's book, *What is and what might be*. Mr. Holmes evidently thinks that we are still as mechanical as ever in education. But his outlook seems to be blurred by the notion that western civilization has been all wrong from the beginning, a prejudice that puts much of his reasoning out of court.

will be more really full of life and freedom, and the parents will have begun to believe in them.

It is possible, even probable, that Kingham may see in the twentieth century changes as great as those of the nineteenth. If so, I may be allowed to hope that they will not be changes hurried on by enthusiastic legislators who believe that all happiness can be secured by Acts of Parliament. The diseases of town life may need occasional surgical operations ; but that is not the right way to treat us country patients. A good example of this principle is to be seen in the recent discovery that the Enclosure Acts, however well meant, were not all for the best ; and the history of the Poor Laws is of course a standing instance. And country folks do not like to be hurried—will not be hurried, if they can help it. What in the course of centuries they have found worth keeping is not to be tossed away lightly. Let me implore the reformers of the twentieth century to take this as a maxim for their action in rural districts : never to attempt to destroy or alter an ancient institution without fully considering, first, what has been the value of it in the past, apart from any mischief it may have wrought ; secondly, what we now stand to lose, as well as to gain, by being deprived of it. Such questions as these can only be fairly answered by those who have lived in the country, mixed with the country folk, and learnt a few of those principles of honest conservatism which, if tempered with good sense and sound knowledge, are the very salt of country life.





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